

Sight AND Sound

International Film Quarterly/Autumn 1972

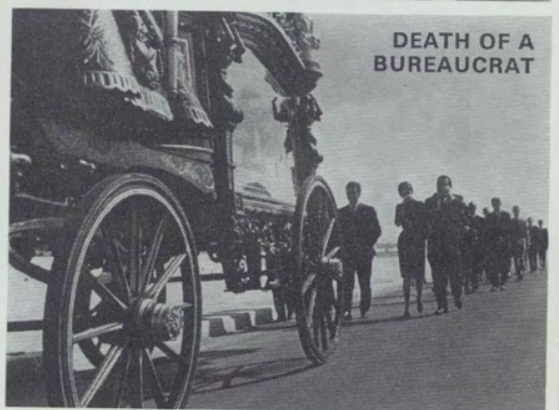
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COURSE 62	30th April, 1973
COURSE 63	1st October, 1973
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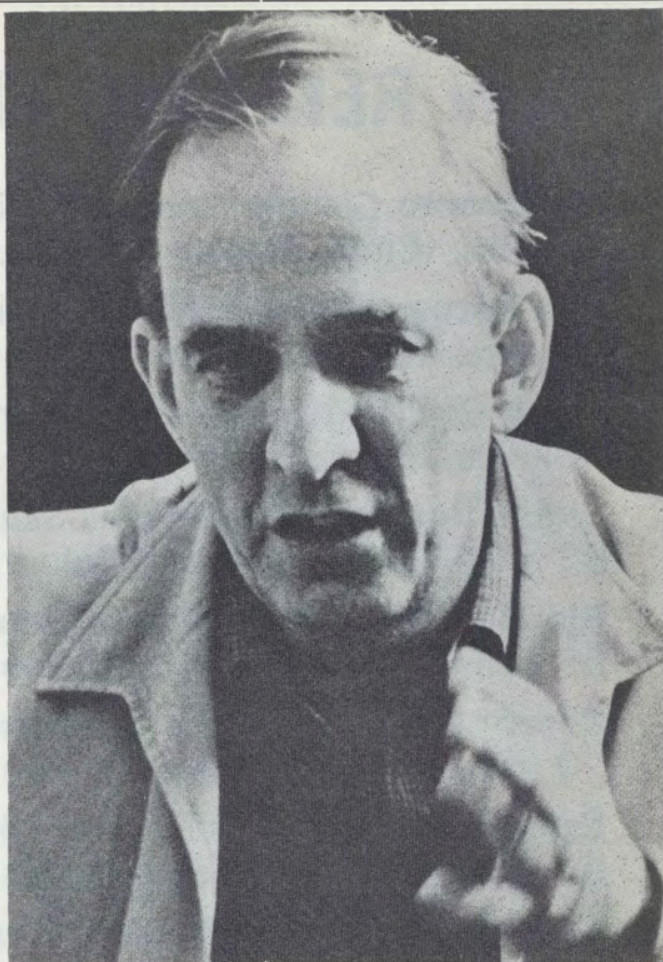
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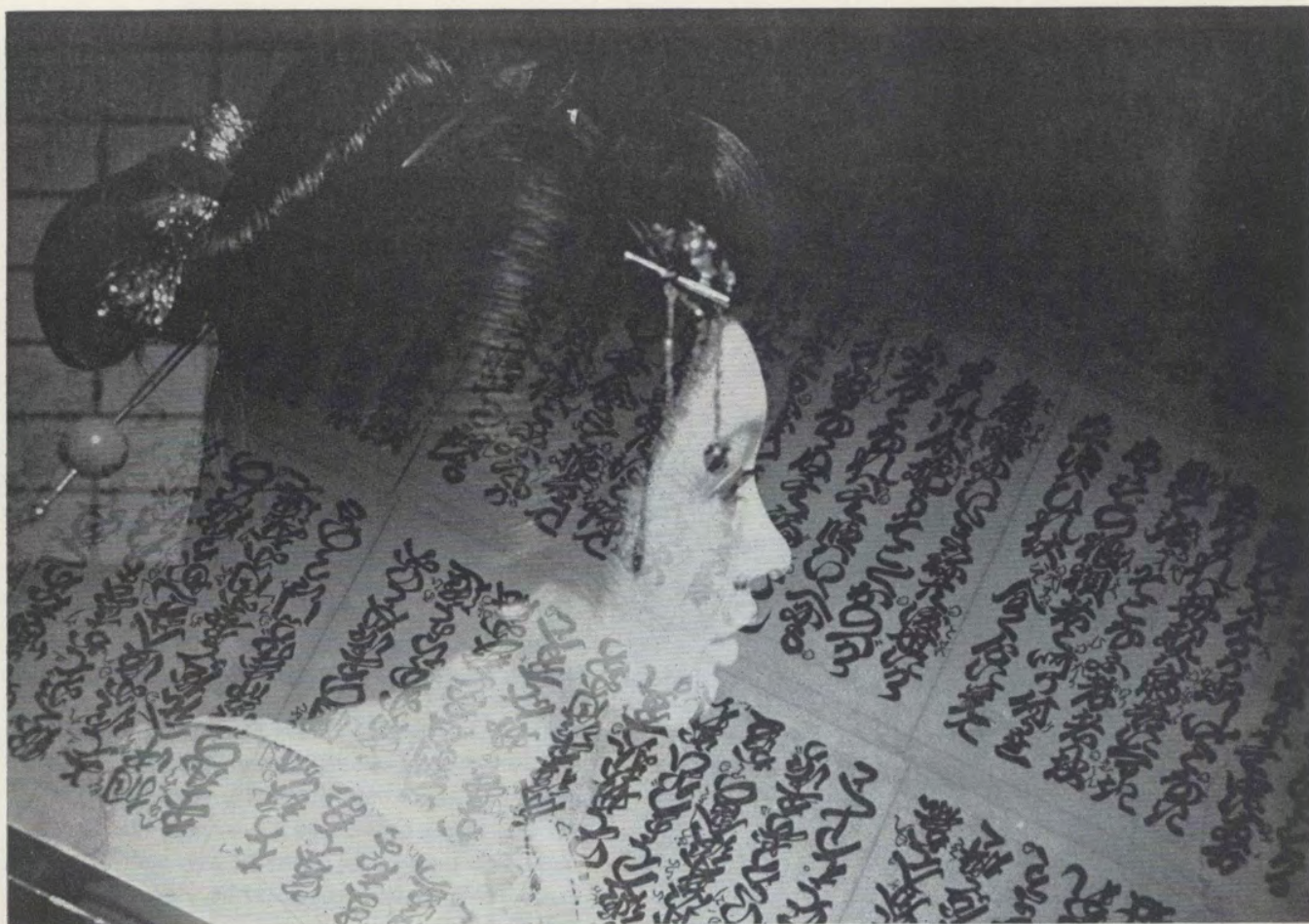
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The London Film Festival, the major cinema event of the year in England, will again this year include a section devoted to new directors and there will be a strong emphasis on the developing Japanese independent cinema. The London Festival, which is a "festival of festivals" as it is primarily composed of the best new features and shorts selected from the other international festivals, will premiere 44 feature films as well as the best shorts from Zagreb, Grenoble, Oberhausen and Cracow. Among the films to be screened at the NFT during the festival are works from Hungary (Miklós Jancsó's *Red Psalm*), Cuba (Tomás Alea's *A Cuban Fight Against Demons*), Canada (Gille Carle's *La Vraie Nature de Bernadette*), India (Satyajit Ray's *Company Limited*), Britain (Christopher Mason's *All The Advantages*), Iran (Daryush Mehrjui's *The Postman*), the U.S.A. (James Ivory's *Savages*) and the Soviet Union (Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*). The independent Japanese selection will include Toshio Matsumoto's *Pandemonium*, Shuji Terayama's *Throw Away Your Books, Run into the Streets*, Yoshishige Yoshida's *Desires, Theories, Actresses*, Noriaki Tsuchimoto's *Mimamata, The Victims of their World*, and a new film by Nagisa Oshima.

The London Film Festival is open to the general public and tickets are available at the National Film Theatre from 7 November. Members of the British Film Institute receive advance notification of the Festival programme and can send in their postal bookings at the beginning of November. Full details about both membership and the Festival are available from the Box Office, National Film Theatre, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 (Tel 01-928 3232/3) or from the Membership Department, British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W.1 (Tel 01-437 4355).

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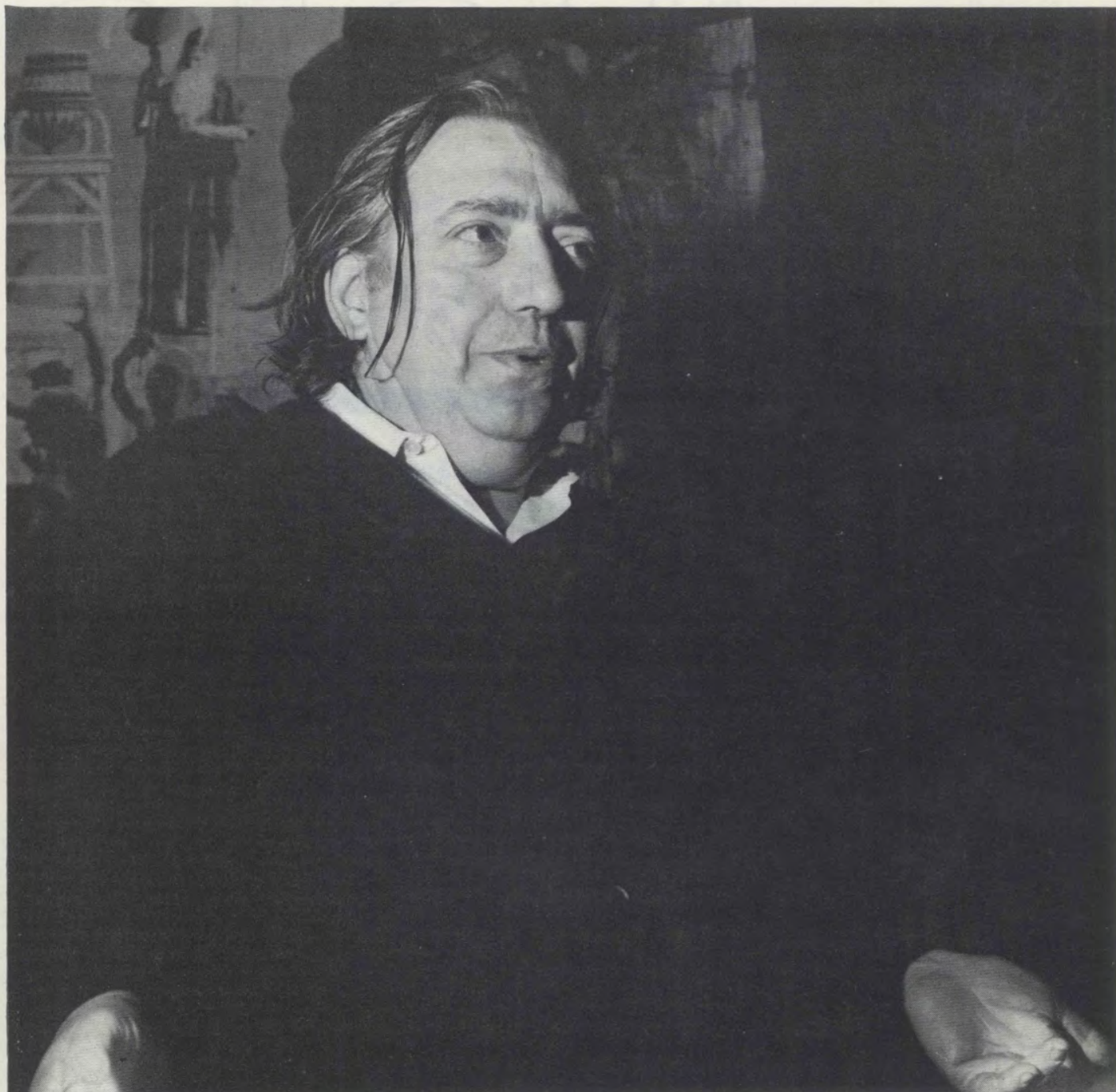
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On the cover: Bulle Ogier in Buñuel's
'Le Charme discret de la Bourgeoise'

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Henri Langlois in his Museum

David Robinson

Photographs by
Nicoletta Zalaffi

THE DREAM

A month after the official *vernissage*, the speeches by M. Duhamel, Minister of Cultural Affairs, and all the rest, the Musée du Cinéma—Henri Langlois' master creation—was still not really finished. Consequently the premature visitor had to start at the end of the Exhibition and pass through all its sixty rooms in order to arrive at the beginning, experiencing the heady sensation of rushing backwards through the whole of movie history, from the wide-screen, stereophonic hurly-burly of here and now to the quiet ghosts from the night of time which Langlois has raised to begin his spectacle. In the first rooms, dim-lit grottoes, are ancient shadows from the Far East, magic lanterns projecting mythological and mystical figures, peepshows and panoramas, toys modelled on Daguerre's Diorama, that most enchanting of all optical entertainments in which insubstantial images were changed constantly and beautifully by the play of light.

The sense of magic and mystery, of luminosity and colour, of *dream*, established in

these first rooms permeates the entire exhibition, as it invests Langlois' whole vision

of the cinema. It is certainly no less apparent in the next series of exhibits, which show the sorcerer and showman giving place to the scientist. Here are Niepce's first shimmering silver photographs, Marey's elegant *fusil chronophotographique*, Muybridge's Californian athletes, frozen in the tenth-of-a-second tributes to their muscular prowess, Edison's first motion-picture machine, now seen for the first time outside Edison premises. Here, indeed, is evidence of each stage in that long evolution which finally culminated on December 28, 1895, with the first public showing of the Lumière Cinématographe (Langlois has the programme, posters, documents and photographs from that occasion, as well as the films themselves, flickering

periodically in the darkened exhibition rooms).

The inauguration of the Musée du Cinéma should have celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Lumière show. It was planned for December 28, 1970; then had to be postponed till next spring, then autumn and spring again. There were always problems—absurd hold-ups over mundane things like lavatory plumbing; more radical difficulties over money. For a time it seemed that the Cinémathèque and the preparations of the Museum depended upon the money Langlois earned by commuting killingly between Paris and Montreal, where he was conducting a seminar in film.

Hearing Monsieur Duhamel's eulogies of Langlois' achievement as founder and creator of the Cinémathèque, it was hard to realise that this was the same man who only four years ago was summarily dismissed from his post. The reaction on that occasion was prompt and violent. Film people from all over the world, from Chaplin and Renoir to Visconti and Kurosawa, protested in vigorous terms. More significant, the students of Paris, demonstrating outside the Chaillot Palace, gained experience of revolution and a foretaste of power which were to prove useful only a month or two later in that year of 1968. Langlois was reinstated, though the Establishment saved face by making his victory a Pyrrhic one: the Cinémathèque lost its state subvention. The triumph of the Museum, however, seems likely to effect a total rehabilitation.

The Establishment's basic mistrust of Langlois was his refusal to act as a proper bureaucrat. As a film archivist, he was always

Set model in the Museum



MUSEUM

prepared to gather in thousands of cans of film, far more than he could ever conserve and catalogue according to the strict international archive rules, reckoning that it was better that the films should moulder, if they must, in his keeping, rather than risk being deliberately destroyed. The Cinémathèque's paper work was to say the least idiosyncratic. I once worked with Langlois when he was ill (his symptoms were aggravated since he had confused his sleeping pills and his vitamins, and was dutifully swallowing the former after every meal, the others once a day before retiring). The key records of the Cinémathèque were all over and under and in his mountainous bed—scores of apparently identical and unidentified school exercise

books filled with his large, unruly handwriting. Uncannily, whenever a query arose, seemingly without looking, he would seize precisely the right page of the right book to tell him at once the whereabouts of the Archive's third copy of *Greed*, or whatever other information was needed.

In his exhibitions (the Museum is only the culmination of twenty-five years of such creations) Langlois also relies on intuition and inspiration. He portrays film history like a painter, using the resources of the Cinémathèque's collections (the sixty rooms in the Chaillot can scarcely house one tenth) to create his own sort of collage. His exhibitions are not formal instructional displays with neat dates and labels: they work through unexpected but meaningful juxtapositions of disparate material. Moving on through the grottoes, we pass from the industrial order of the Lumières to the charmed world of Méliès. In miniature is his greenhouse studio; and, gigantic, the grinning head of the Giant of the Snows. Méliès' own designs, dashed off in blue crayon, evoke a surreal universe in which the fairy memories of childhood and the saucy sophistication of Paris 1900 collide improbably but potently. Tattered fragments of scenery from his theatre, a stiff nude portrait of the lady destined to be his second wife, scripts and letters, sit side by side with the plain and down-to-earth engines of brass and mahogany which were the motor power of dreams.

Round a corner, and the impressions change: here is all the brashness and nerve of the pioneer days in America. Astonishing things have survived—Griffith scripts from the Biograph days, the little grey flannel dress that Bessie Love wore in her first film, in 1915 . . . And then we are in *Caligari*. Hermann Warm, one of the original designers, now 82 years old, has supervised the re-creation, full-size, of the original set. Langlois has rearranged it so that the visitor seems to be absorbed, pincered into the angles, likely at any instant to meet Cesare the Somnambulist; except that Langlois delights to surprise, and instead it is Max Schreck, the cadaverous vampire from *Nosferatu*, who suddenly confronts you in an alley of the *Caligari* town.

After this the riches become too dizzying to keep track of: Hans Richter's abstract inventions; constructions by Fernand Léger for *Le Ballet Mécanique*; wicked drawings by Eisenstein; the maquette for *Sous les Toits de Paris*; Soviet Constructivist posters; scripts and designs by everybody; self-portraits by von Stroheim; Buster's hat . . . Old movie costumes are not just rags for Langlois, but acquire psychic properties from the way he parades them. They stand, march, lurk, recline like odalisques. Some are impaled like butterflies on the wall, others float insubstantially. The shades of their former wearers are immediately at hand. There is Stroheim's gleaming white greatcoat and at its feet a silver lamé sheath

that could have been worn by no one but Mae Murray. There is a dress of Catherine Hessling for *Nana*; Valentino's tunic from *The Sheik*. Personages at once surprising and familiar float into the vision—Garbo, Ivan, Apu—exactly as in a dream.

He's just a fetishist, say his enemies and people who think that old clothes and bits of paper are sentimental and somehow not serious. But for Langlois all the artefacts and the detritus are tangible links, establishing a continuity between the two-dimensional image and real life, bridges between reality and dream, between the maker and the object, witnesses of the act of creation.

One proof that Langlois has created a living panorama of cinema history and not a mausoleum is that his exhibition is always haunted by the real-life creators, fascinated by the evidence they have themselves left behind them. The day I was there 82-year-old Clarence Brown was going round, exhausting even Langlois with his careful study of every object; marvelling to find that there was wide screen, deep screen, big screen, sound, colour and stereoscopy long before he started directing in 1920; delightedly acting out tales of Garbo. Ponti and Loren were expected: they wanted to see how her costume for *La Ciociara* had been displayed. A day or so before, Raoul Walsh had visited the Musée at the same time as Joe Hamman, the first French cow-

M. Méliès with the Giant of the Snows from his father's studio



boy star. As they gazed at the still dashing costume Hamman had worn in 1912, Walsh asked him his age: 'I am 85.' 'How young you are. I am 88.'

Some of the creators have contributed with their own hands to the Musée. At the end of the labyrinth, after the great wall decorated with revolutionary slogans by Langlois' supporters, the students of Paris, comes the large projection hall where four, five and six films a day will be shown. The wall is a glittering collage of Japanese costumes. Kurosawa designed them; Kinugasa laid them out behind the gold-thread mesh. He was still at work on the calligraphy to complete them. . .

The end is in fact all rather a rush: Langlois started from the beginning, then found he had to compress everything from the Italian neorealists onwards into the last three rooms . . . And then suddenly you are back in the street and the daylight and the dusty Chaillot gardens and the buzz of Renaults, wondering whether this world or Langlois' is really the dream. ■

THE SEVENTH HEAVEN

Henri Langlois Talks to Rui Nogueira and Nicoletta Zalaffi



'Love is Space and Time made known to the heart'. MARCEL PROUST

L'Amour Fou

I suppose the idea of creating a Museum of the Cinema was conceived in me before the war, at the time when I began to collect posters, models, sketches, the Méliès camera, more or less anything I could lay my hands on. It was only after the war, however, that the idea quickened into life: in physical terms, the Avenue de Messine* in 1949 was the prefiguration in miniature of a museum.

One probably has to be madly in love with the cinema to embark on such a venture. I can tell you, at any rate, that I fell madly in love with the cinema in a big way in 1928, and more modestly in 1926, a period when I used to screen *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (Le Bargy and Calmettes, 1908) for myself morning, noon and night.

All the kids in my generation were crazy about the cinema. I remember when I came to France how we used to play at *The Three Musketeers* (Fred Niblo, 1921) during break at school. Yet this love I shared with the other kids had not yet become a passion. For me, *l'amour fou* is bound up with Time and Space.

I was not born in France, but in Turkey. There, like all children, I lived my life in the present, with no conception therefore of Time. One day I had been taken to the cinema to see *Jeanne d'Arc*—no, not the De Mille version, but I can place this memory around 1918–19 because I remember another film I saw at the same time, *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (Henri Pouctal serial, 1917–18)—and I realised that this Paris where people walked around in costume was not the Paris where my father, then still in the army, was stationed. So this Paris I was being shown was not the Present. Consequently the cinema became closely linked in my mind to this revelation of Space.

*The site of the Cinémathèque Française from 1944–55.

me Time is a Space.

Only this morning I was saying to someone that I had missed my vocation because I could have been a marvellous madman. I would have fulfilled myself totally. I am a man who could have been mad but who has contained his madness. I am therefore a conscious madman. However, I acquired my vocation for cinema during 1928–29 when I used to see films in order to analyse them.

As a child I used to go to the pictures with the maids on half-days and Sundays. In local cinemas, naturally. My parents, being neither rich nor poor—they belonged to that class of persons from between the wars which no longer enjoyed quite the position it once had—were perfectly well able to treat me to the cinema, but not to the Gaumont-Palace. Being obliged to frequent Pathé rather than Gaumont cinemas, I therefore missed out on the entire American cinema. Instead, I saw German, French and Italian films. It may seem silly, but it is extremely important as regards matters of Geography and of Space, this fact of not having been able to select my films before 1927–28.

Authors and Actors

The Musée du Cinéma will be open from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. At closing-time, which will be later than for other museums, people will be able to pass from the hall into an auditorium where I hope to hold three performances a day: at 7, 9 and 11 p.m. In this auditorium I would like to be able to show some of the silent films I can normally only programme at the Cinémathèque at three o'clock in the afternoon. There are a great many films which attract only a small minority of people. The tragedy for all cinémathèques is that they are trapped between public taste and the need to mould that taste. Most of them are therefore forced to—how shall I put it?—to trail after public taste instead of blazing a way for it.

Take Ozu, for instance. It took time for people in Paris to realise that he deserved the reputation he enjoyed in Japan. Only a couple of years ago the prevailing opinion was 'Mizoguchi and Kurosawa are geniuses, but Ozu, yes, well...' Every time an Ozu film was shown, there were only ten or twenty people in the audience. Thanks to some persistence in screening his films, and the retrospective we devoted to his work, realisation that he was an extraordinary film-maker finally dawned.

I was conquered by his genius while lecturing on the contemporary cinema. I was speaking about the Japanese cinema, and as usual had taken along some reels of film to illustrate what I was saying. And suddenly I realised that what I was saying no longer bore any relation to what I was seeing. In showing extracts from Mizoguchi, Kurosawa and Ozu, I was praising the first two at the expense of the third, whereas I discovered that Ozu virtually demolished the other two. Sandwiched between Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, a reel of Ozu revealed his genius—a genius not instantly accessible, however, for Ozu is full of delicate nuance and his films comprise a great deal of talk. Five years ago audiences found this Japanese intimist oppressive because he had neither

the brilliance nor the charm of Mizoguchi—and by charm I mean the true, mythological charm of the Fates, not the charm of a pretty woman. Ozu, however, is life. His films possess that extraordinary quality inherent in the American cinema: the purity of life.

In Mizoguchi there is an aesthetic element, though the arabesque it traces is so consummate that it succeeds in serving the theme, so that when one is drawn into the world of the film one does not at first realise how consciously skilful it is. Then comes the flash of illumination and one realises the extent to which a Mizoguchi film is composed. A Kurosawa film is also composed, though differently. Either way, all composition involves artifice. Except with Ozu. His characters are perfectly distilled, yet living beings.

Consider *Les Cousins* (Chabrol, 1959) and *Les Tricheurs* (Carné, 1958), for example. The French prefer the Chabrol film because they say it is true; foreigners prefer Carné's film because they think it *must* be the truth. Therein lies the nuance. Critics and connoisseurs have given *Les Tricheurs* a very low reputation. Yet what is *Les Tricheurs*? It is a modern transposition of *La Princesse de Clèves*, only you have to think twice before realising it. Similarly with Orson Welles' *Macbeth*. Everyone says, 'Oh dear, Welles has been imitating Fritz Lang.' But this is completely untrue. To discover the real resemblances, just take a look at certain shots from *Ivan the Terrible* and *Macbeth* side by side. I am almost tempted to say that *Macbeth* is a pastiche of *Ivan the Terrible*. Of course the décor in Welles' film makes one think of Expressionism, and so puts one on a false track. You don't think of Madame de La Fayette while watching *Les Tricheurs* any more than you think of Eisenstein while watching *Macbeth*.

Foreigners who do not know France are bowled over by *Les Tricheurs* because of this universal element drawn from *La Princesse de Clèves*. *Les Cousins* is a chronicle of everyday life whose accuracy we can savour in relation to real life; but unlike *Les Tricheurs*, it does not have the mythical aspect of *La Princesse de Clèves*, which is all the more striking because transposed. I can quite understand why Russians should be overwhelmed by Carné's film. They know nothing of Parisian life, and through *Les Tricheurs* they can imagine it. The power of the film, I repeat, lies in Madame de La Fayette. As far as love is concerned, and the amorous relationships of the three characters, the film tells the same story as the novel, transposed to another milieu which is mythical to Frenchmen, but for others is wonderfully true because psychologically exact. Obviously, therefore, unless one is intimately acquainted with Japan, one cannot know the extent to which Ozu equals Truffaut. Mizoguchi is skilful but sophisticated. There is no sophistication about Ozu. Today the Ozu battle is won. Tomorrow he will draw full houses, just like Bergman.

In 1956 whenever I showed *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920), a film with a great reputation, I used to have full houses. When I showed *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) a film labelled as esoteric, hardly anyone came. A few years later the situation was reversed because a new scale of values had

sprung up between the films and the public. Would you credit that the Americans are unaware of *The Wind* (Sjöström, 1928)? *The Wind* is the American cinema seen by Europeans. But the Americans adored Pagnol at a time when he was totally rejected by the French film world. Once a label had been firmly attached to Pagnol, prejudice prevented people from realising that America was right.

The Cinémathèque Française and Eastman House represent different trends, two quite distinct evolutions. Stemming from the great Ciné-Club and avant-garde traditions, we naturally laid the stress on the *auteur* and *films d'auteur*. The Eastman House *politique*, on the other hand, was based on one of the great tenets of the American cinema, 'A great film needs great stars, because the human involvement is essential,' and so highlighted the actors. Of course the Cinémathèque's point of view also implies actors. Let's say that we have *auteurs* emended by actors, whereas Eastman House has the actor through whom the *auteur's* emendations are effected. And that's the whole point. Why, for instance, do I have all Dietrich films but not all Garbo's? Because Marlene, up to a point, means Sternberg. Whatever my admiration for Marlene, that admiration is bound up with my admiration for Sternberg. First Pygmalion, and then the actress. As a spectator, I may go to see Garbo or Marlene; but as curator of the Cinémathèque, I favour the creator.

Nevertheless, actors can be creators. Consider, for instance, how Marlene obliged all her directors after Sternberg to do Marlene Dietrich, in other words, to do Sternberg; for she was Marlene before Sternberg, even though she had not yet discovered herself. As far as we are concerned she appeared out of nothing, but in fact she had made films before *The Blue Angel* (1930). Fonda did not appear out of nowhere, but before Fritz Lang he performed variations in search of himself. He was a violin; Lang showed him he was a Stradivarius. In the films he made before *You Only Live Once* (1937), like *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Hathaway, 1936), Henry Fonda does not have the *density* which has never since left him.

His Master's Voice

Nowadays I am by no means alone in being able to recognise *The Birth of a Nation* from a single frame of the film. At one time, it's true, this might have seemed something remarkable. But in any case this is one of those apocryphal sayings which form part of the golden legends people like to invent in order to characterise. I can't deny my special knowledge in the area, but between me and the silent cinema there is above all a great love. Try to imagine yourself in the mind of a young man who adored the cinema and who suddenly found himself transplanted from the films of Lang, Feyder, Lubitsch, into such French horrors as *Les Gaietés de l'Escadron* or *La Tendresse*. It was awful. People accustomed to watching a certain kind of cinema were tortured by the arrival of sound. I was upset by talking pictures too, but that's another story.

When you see in images, you do not need to write words. The silent cinema is a more

abstract art than sound. Even when they worked from scripts, the great silent directors made *their* films. When sound came in film-makers began to need someone to write dialogue, to need all sorts of things. One-man bands don't exactly grow on trees. To write dialogue, for example, demands a considerable knowledge of human nature. A concierge must talk like a concierge, an aristocrat like an aristocrat. All too often dialogue is just literature.

Thanks to television, the cinema is at last becoming audio-visual. We have arrived at a great turning-point, now that sound recording has become so simple, where the cinema can once again spring from life. Without fakery. This is unmistakable in *Une Femme Mariée* (Godard, 1964). When they are acting, Godard's actors seem to be playing brilliantly, but when Godard tells them 'Now improvise,' they no longer seem equal to the occasion. Yet they are, more so than ever. As soon as they begin to improvise, their eyes come alive. As they rack their brains for words, they begin to exist, they are no longer people reciting speeches. This is extraordinary. Actors in silent days didn't recite speeches either: they were obliged to live the moment. Therein lies the greatness of the silent cinema.

Even before 1936 I used to start my daily film-going at the 10 a.m. performance. That was how I came to be on such intimate terms with the American cinema of the Thirties. At that time I believed in a renaissance of the cinema. But I was wrong. With sound mixing, a pseudo-cinema was born. Neither silent nor talking. It was a compromise that produced the *cinéma-spectacle*. Sternberg's films have the splendours of silent cinema and the semblances of sound—for it is only a semblance. But if his films are compromises in sound, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Dreyer, 1928) is a compromise in silence, because it is an intimation of the coming of sound. You are of course right, there was a pre-talkie period in the cinema. To tell you the truth, I watched—for purely practical reasons—hundreds of films without subtitles before making this discovery.

For years I wondered why people went on saying 'The Cinémathèque Française created this, the Cinémathèque Française did that.' I don't mind them saying that the Cinémathèque is the father of the Nouvelle Vague, but then why hasn't the BFI spawned a new wave, and why hasn't the Museum of Modern Art in New York any progeny? I can't make it out. What does all this nonsense mean? And yet it isn't nonsense, it's a fact. But just because I love the cinema, that doesn't mean a Truffaut is going to love it. I didn't even know him during those Avenue de Messine days. But there it is. By showing films without subtitles, I forced people to look. To my mind, the point of departure between the cinema of today and the cinema of tomorrow as I envisage it lies in the compromise of dialogue. Take the classic American sound comedies, so dazzling in their dialogue, or the magnificent films written by Prévert, a man with miraculous power over words: they all have a touch of literature about them. Whenever you begin to listen to dialogue, it means there is something literary about it, doesn't it? The silent cinema was not literary; when it was, it was bad.

So if the Cinémathèque Française played a major role in the creation of the Nouvelle Vague, it is because we didn't have enough money to subtitle prints.

What is a film? A physical presence. With sound, the image acquired tone. What counts in a voice is the intonation, the modulations. When you speak to someone you cannot see, on the telephone for instance, you know instinctively whether or not he is lying. The voice expresses life, joy, grief, love, everything. Animals follow everything perfectly from the tone we use in speaking to them. And just as silent films were devised so that one had no need of words to understand them, so one should be able to make talking pictures which do not need to rely on words to be understood. The language of the image, intensified by the tone of the human voice, will suffice to make reality tangible. And this will be the end of the Tower of Babel.

The silent cinema put an end to the Tower of Babel; the talking picture, however, made us believe that the Tower of Babel was triumphant, that in order to be understood in America a French film had to be subtitled, and so forth. The cinema had become a cripple. That was its tragedy. Today it is so no longer. We do not realise it yet, but television is working for us. There is no need to understand what people are saying when Kennedy is assassinated. There is no need to understand what people are saying when they sleep with each other.

Take 'I love you', for instance. You can say 'I love you' and be in love, but you can equally say 'I love you' when it is a lie. It is the tone that counts. The words 'I love you' should be of no importance. This is the victory the cinema must win for itself.

The corroboration of what I suggest is *La Cicatrice Intérieure* (Garrel, 1970). *La Cicatrice Intérieure* is a masterpiece, so they say, to anyone who doesn't understand German.* For me, the film is a masterpiece. An absolute masterpiece. I don't know quite how to explain... suddenly all humanity is there, the whole earth talking. The Earth in its primitive role of Mother. But it isn't even the Earth talking, it is the Humus... It's incredible, it's all there.

But I would like to tell you an amusing story. In New York once during a Congress of 'Cinematologists' I happened to meet Richard Griffith, and our conversation at one point turned to Marlene Dietrich. 'It's awful,' he said, 'but Miss Dietrich is just a silly, pretentious old woman... She insisted on choosing the extracts from her films. But I got my own back during the screening when the whole audience dissolved into giggles.' 'Dissolved into giggles?' I said. 'Oh yes, the dialogue was so awful in the extracts she thought were wonderful that everybody laughed.' 'How strange! But what did she show?' 'Oh *Blonde Venus*, *Shanghai Express*, *Scarlet Empress*.'

You may draw one of two conclusions. Either Richard Griffith was right—and he probably was right about the dialogue, for



*In this film Pierre Clémenti speaks French; Nico, English and German; Philippe Garrel does not speak.

'On a certain level they are sublime...' Lillian Gish in 'The Wind'; Ozu's 'Early Autumn'; Dietrich in 'Blonde Venus'

it may well be that we find Sternberg's films sublime (and on a certain level they are sublime, aren't they?) because we don't understand English. Or he was a bloody fool because he didn't realise that in a sense the dialogue is of no consequence. It is the image that counts.

The Cinema is a Mystery . . .

I said earlier that I was upset by talking pictures. Why? Canned music. When I opened the Cinémathèque after the Liberation, it was Kosma who played the piano accompaniments for silent films; and he was sensational, I assure you. Subsequently, since I didn't have enough funds, I began showing films without any music, and that became the fashion everywhere. In a few years time everybody will think that silent films were shown without music. And that is a pity.

I would like to add one thing, however. In the days when we used to go to a cinema in the 18th *arrondissement* between Père Lachaise and Belleville for secret screenings of banned silent films, there was no pianist either. This was how, while watching *The Battleship Potemkin*, I discovered that a film had its own rhythm, and that a great film therefore had no need of music.

In the early days of sound the great problem, I remember, was synchronisation. To demonstrate how unnecessary that agony was one need look no further than Erik Satie. When René Clair asked him to write the music for *Entr'acte* (1924), he simply didn't bother about synchronisation. He worked to an approximation. And his music, which is not synchronised with the images, supports and reinforces the film.

In making the transition from silent films to sound—during the stage of synchronised soundtracks without dialogue—music for the most part became canned music. From a musical point of view there was therefore a difference between what one might call the instrumental quality, and the quality of the recorded sound.

For the inauguration of the Maison de la Culture at Le Havre a homage to Gance had been planned. Gance is a strange character. Just as he framed his *Napoléon* for a rectangular screen in the interests of modernity, he also added a synchronised soundtrack, and he insisted that we show this talking version. Being a stubborn man, I managed to arrange to have the second part accompanied on the piano by Kosma. It was magnificent.

People today cannot understand the fervour with which *La Roue* (Gance, 1921-24) was greeted in its day. Séverin Mars is a ham, but if Kosma is playing the piano accompaniment, he becomes a genius. And why is this same Séverin Mars no longer grotesque but superb, Beethovenian? Simply because the film was conceived on a musical foundation.

The cinema is a mystery unfolding before us. It is a *fatum*, evolving implacably, independent of man. On the screen, evolving in another dimension, is an existence other than our own. When a pianist like Kosma improvised, his music set up a dialogue with that mathematically irreducible element, the film. And the result was a meeting between the abstract and the concrete. Absolutely unforgettable.

Silent cinema is the image. And what is the image? It is a diamond. A diamond which men learned to cut, polish and set off to advantage, but which always retains its irreducible nature. The sound film is an alloy. It is a ceramic. How can one fuse these two things?

The problem of the cinema results from this sandwich. There is the bread, the butter and the ham (image, music, dialogue). It isn't bad to eat, but from an artistic point of view the three things are not one single matter. A painting is a canvas covered with paint. It is a homogeneous whole even if the two elements which form it are chemically distinct.

When I lecture, I sometimes take the liberty of cutting off a film's soundtrack. If you do this to *M* (Lang, 1931), the images become flat; switch it on again, and they regain their tone. This shows that *M* is a true talking picture. Deprived of sound, *The Most Dangerous Game* (Schoedsack and Pichel, 1932) reveals what its soundtrack conceals. You see people whose lips move but whose eyes and faces are expressionless. They are in effect people talking, but saying what? They make a pretence of speaking, they imitate people talking. Do you see what I mean? It was through experimenting like this that I realised Gabin was nothing without sound. Why? Because he wanted to seem natural, and since the stress was laid on the dialogue, the result was naturalism.

There is one man, just one, who succeeded in making a homogeneous whole out of talking pictures, and he is dead. Vigo. He took sound, image, music and dialogue and merged them—and I mean merged, not mixed. The result was *L'Atalante* (1934). Seeing this film you see why the cinema is dying from a horrible disease: naturalism. By naturalism I mean a servile imitation of reality. No film seems more naturalistic than *L'Atalante*. But only seems: in fact it is a stained glass window.

The difference between cinematographic reality and naturalism is like the difference between stained glass and coloured glass. Vigo re-created life, he did not imitate it. But he died too soon, and he took his secret with him. Like 13th-century stained glass, *L'Atalante* carries within it the solution to the mystery.

The Looking-Glass World

Traditional cinema is dead? Not yet. Its agony may last for years. To save the cinema people go on doing bad television, but as long as there is bad television there will be bad cinema.

We are spectators at the Grand Café. Suddenly the magic of the image appears, a magic of which man had a presentiment and which forms part of pre-history.

Idiots have done their best to persuade me that a child hears before it sees. This may be true of tiny babies, who are blind though not for long. At all events, it is only when they open their eyes that they become *aware*. And anyway, are childhood memories visual or auditory?

The primitive human state is the image. Man looks and suddenly finds himself beyond. And he believes in the beyond. One day he finds himself face to face with a sheet of water. He leans over and finds himself in the looking-glass world. But he knows

nothing of the phenomenon of reflection. What he sees is therefore not reality. So he says to himself that there is a world beyond the water: the beyond. It is much the same thing as my two visions of Paris.

For years man lives with this notion of the beyond, until the beyond unexpectedly reappears. Monsieur Lumière's train comes along: man is afraid, he is going to be run over. Thanks to the cinema, Time becomes Space, Space becomes Time. What people felt when they saw the Lumière films for the first time is inconceivable. They were in Paris seeing Tokyo and it moved, it was there.

With the arrival of television one found oneself face to face with the death of Kennedy. No more Space, no more Time. And to prevent television from killing the cinema, the television film was invented. The worse it is, the longer traditional cinema will survive.

Education Through Osmosis

The cinema is the reverse of illiteracy because it is the art of illiterates. Illiterates are people who think. They don't know how to read or write so they have to think, haven't they? People who can read and write read the newspapers. And the difference between *cinéphiles* (film-lovers) and those whom I call *cinéphages* (film-eaters) is that the first love the cinema.

The cinema is a means towards the acquisition of knowledge in the manner of St. Thomas: by touch. Read all you like about love, but if you haven't made love your idea of it will be totally false.

Referring to the Méliès exhibition I arranged at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, a film-maker's wife paid me the most wonderful compliment imaginable: 'You guide people into a book which is no book. You have re-created an ambience which enables them, by plunging into it, to understand everything through a sort of osmosis.' I would like the Musée du Cinéma to serve the same purpose. I do not believe in education in the form which we call education. True education is osmosis. Latin, mathematics and so on are useful as mental gymnastics, but art is a subject that cannot be taught. It is learned through osmosis.

Among the Eskimos, all his games prepare the child for living. He plays, but in fact he is preparing himself for the hunt, for fishing. He imitates his father and gradually, through his play, he learns. This is the opposite of a university education. Whether one likes it or not, moreover, education is still a matter of class. Someone whose home contains an extensive library, or who grows up in artistic surroundings, is enriched even if he rejects the environment which formed him. He is already a step ahead of a poor boy who learns everything he knows at school. Dumas did more for History than all the teachers put together.

For years, all exhibitions have been based on the idiotic system of education by explanation, because people like to learn what they should think. But art cannot be explained, it is felt. If there is to be a bond between art and man, we must re-create the umbilical cord. ■

Interview recorded in Paris on April 27th, 1972. Translated by Tom Milne.

Mason Graef

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

Brownlow Frears

The British cinema has always been hidebound by tradition. Or at least that is what foreign critics, and sometimes British critics as well, have tended to think. 'Le cinéma de sa Majesté,' as the French pejoratively call it. It hasn't always been true, of course, and it certainly isn't now. Increasingly, film-makers in Britain are taking their own direction—some of them, like Christopher Mason, outside the industry; others, like Bill Douglas, now planning the second part of the trilogy which began with *My Childhood*, returning to their roots. More directors are crossing the artificial frontiers between film and television; Stephen Frears, for instance, has moved from television to *Gumshoe* and back to television. Film-making finance has also changed direction. Christopher Mason's films are privately funded; Bill Douglas and Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo have been backed by the BFI's Production Board; Stephen Frears is filming for the BBC; and part of the cost of Roger Graef's *Space between Words* series was put up by a Los Angeles company. These are some of the alternative routes.



Miles Halliwell as Winstanley. Frame enlargement from tests (1966). Cameraman: Chris Menges

Before the deluge

Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, makers of *It Happened Here*, are about to start work on *Comrade Jacob*.

Writing about a film before its first day of shooting may seem a dangerous indulgence. But the patterns set by pre-production work decide the final result as surely as direction. Most crucial are the people selected to work

on the film, for despite the *auteur* theory, film-making is generally a cooperative enterprise. No film will be more dependent on its crew than *Comrade Jacob*, for it is being made on a minuscule budget and therefore depends upon voluntary support. We intend to follow that old Hollywood advice: 'Put the money on the screen, not in a producer's pocket.'

Since Andrew Mollo and I first became excited about the idea of making *Comrade Jacob* (in 1965), we've endeavoured to transmit our enthusiasm to producers and distributors. The subject matter was unlikely to appeal to either, for David Caute's novel describes the brief existence of a remarkable community, the Diggers, who occupied St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Surrey, in 1649. Led by Gerrard Winstanley, they were a Utopian group, opposed to private ownership and the injustices of privilege, who set out to offer what would now be called an alternative society—a non-violent, hard-working community who sought nobody's destruction, but who cultivated the commons and wasteland in order to survive. Unfortunately, even the commons belonged to someone—and local landowners managed to enlist military support to destroy the Diggers.

David Caute's novel, published in 1961, was brought to our notice by Miles Halliwell (who, by coincidence, plays Winstanley). Oscar Lewenstein, then of Woodfall Films, liked the book and enabled us to write a screenplay. We had to secure a guarantee of distribution to raise the finance—£72,000 was the lowest reasonable figure for a full professional production. Naturally, we expected a catalogue of rejections; and we got them. But the way the film was rejected was fascinating, and it might be worth relating some of the sad events.

Wrote one man, whose job was to select the product of a powerful new corporation: 'I think there is a strong dramatic picture here, but I know I could never sell it to this company. Regardless of how convincingly I could talk about it, I know these people well enough to realise that they would insist on seeing it as a "depressing, arty subject", and that would be that . . . These people are just too new and conservative in film production to risk sticking their neck out on making interesting films.'

His replacement read the script a few months later. 'I'm sorry,' he said, 'but this man Winstanley—I just don't like him. Now I admit you don't have to like the central character. In Henry Levin's picture you



Above: agricultural tool from the Rev. Philip Wright's collection. Far right: ancient farm cart

don't like Genghis Khan—but he has a fine relationship with a girl.'

Producers were hypnotised in the mid-Sixties by what they called 'young talent'. Our youth, if not our talent, secured us a number of expensive lunches. It also helped to be British, particularly when dealing with Americans. One new producer contacted us from California and asked to read the script. 'My current contract,' he wrote later, 'is one that would make them anxious to waste dollars in the millions rather than in the hundreds of thousands required by a project like this, and any recommendation from me at this moment would probably have the effect opposite to the one we would be hoping for.'

Said an old-time Hollywood front-office man, who had read the script for a new-style Hollywood supremo: 'To be truthful, I just didn't like it. This story may have

validity in terms of the depression, but to me it didn't have any validity in terms of today. We're living in a world of milk and honey. For instance, I've just come back from Rumania. Now the Europa Hotel, Bucharest, the Dorchester it is not. But on each floor there is a glass case, and in the glass case there is a bottle of Chanel No. 5. I think that shows even the Communists can afford luxuries, and that life today is very different.'

The meetings, discussions, negotiations came to nothing. Our option on the book lapsed, and no money was available for a renewal. However, since we felt producers would react in much the same way whoever tried to set it up, we (illegally) kept the script in circulation. A producer who was interested in another of our projects, and had admitted his failure with it, tried to restore his confidence (and ours) by a wild promise. He undertook to find £20,000 so that we could make *Comrade Jacob* on our own. 'It'll be no problem to find that kind of sum.' He may have found it, but he never made it available to us.

We learnt from an agent that another team was interested in *Comrade Jacob*. The writer John McGrath, a friend of David Caute's, had long admired the book and felt compelled to make a film of it. McGrath was very sympathetic when I explained our position; I have seldom encountered such generosity from a professional. 'I can't start on it at once,' he said. 'If you can set it up in six months, it's yours.'

David Caute, however, seemed reluctant to let us have another option. When I telephoned him, he was very honest. He said he didn't want us to make the picture. He wanted it written by John McGrath and directed by Jack Gold. But despite the efforts of producers like Tony Garnett and Otto Plaschkes, McGrath and Gold had no better luck than we had. Undeterred, McGrath turned his script into play form and *Comrade Jacob* was presented on the stage.

We gave up hope, but the desire to make the picture nagged at us constantly. As far as I was concerned, I could hardly see the countryside without mentally shooting a sequence from *Comrade Jacob*.

When the BFI Production Board instituted its new policy—a reprieve for worthwhile projects which the industry could not or would not support—they were more interested in another of our scripts. When we explained our ideas for *Comrade Jacob*, the committee discussed the matter and eventually decided to support us. Generously, David Caute agreed to write the script himself and to give us the rights for next to nothing.

Andrew and I had not made a feature picture for eight years. I had remained in the cutting room. Andrew formed Historical Research Unit, and worked as military adviser on pictures like *Dr. Zhivago*. The prospect of making another film on a tiny budget—*It Happened Here* cost £7,000—was both appalling and exhilarating. Our last involvement in the feature industry was with the Bryan Forbes-EMI production *The Breaking of Bumbo* (£900,000); we clashed with the associate producer and were rapidly removed from the scene.

Producers are always suspicious about us.

They cannot understand why we work together. When we explain, they become even more alarmed, for they quickly realise that their role is unnecessary. Andrew and I between us have had experience in every department of film-making except the processing; if the worst comes to the worst (and on this kind of picture it frequently does), we can keep going without other technicians. Andrew is as responsible for the picture as I am—at the pre-production stage even more so, for he acts as production manager, art director, costume department, property man, set builder, unit driver and historical researcher. Last week, with a group of volunteers, he dismantled an ancient thatched barn in Essex—a monumental job which I was convinced was well-nigh impossible. In two days, the timbers, numbered and photographed, had been transported to Surrey, ready to be reconstructed on our location, and with the addition of wattle and daub, converted into a peasant's cottage. The job was well-nigh impossible, and the volunteers returned exhausted, and covered with fleas from the thatch. All they had to do next was chop down thirty or forty trees and build the settlement. . .

Driving through several hundred miles of England in search of locations, Andrew and I found many 17th-century buildings. But they had passed through what we rapidly learned was the Great Age of Titivation, and most of them resembled Ye Olde Tea Shoppes, with their spotless white walls and blackened timbers. (In Weobley, we even came across a mock Tudor bird-table.) Thanks to a paragraph about the film in the *Sunday Times*, we were contacted by an expert on the Diggers, Marina Lewycka, whose friend, Nick Rowling, proved to be an architectural historian. He saved us weeks of work by taking us to the Royal Commission of Historic Monuments, where photographs are preserved of every old building in the British Isles.

As with *It Happened Here*, we are determined that *Comrade Jacob* should be as authentic as possible, and we are dependent upon consultants for each area covered by the film.

Our agricultural adviser, Dr. Ted Collins of Reading University, has toured our location, pointing out which plants and trees were in evidence in the 17th century, and which should not show. He has prepared a dossier detailing the kinds of crops the Diggers grew, and where, and how; he has illustrated the kinds of cattle and sheep that existed then—and put us on to the Rare Breeds Preservation Trust, who have agreed to let us use some of their animals.

A collector of agricultural implements, the Reverend Philip Wright, has been enormously helpful—putting us on to ancient carts, hidden in the depths of the countryside, old buildings (including the one Andrew went off with) and esoteric societies, such as one which keeps horse-ploughing alive. He has also lent us some of his relics to have copied. Andrew discovered a blacksmith close to our location who was overjoyed at the opportunity of re-creating such ancient implements as the breast-plough.

The Sealed Knot, the organisation founded by Brigadier Peter Young to re-stage battles of the Civil War, is co-operating to the full and helping us to stage an im-

pressive aspect of Marston Moor—despite our minimal budget.

Madeleine Ginsberg, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, is our costume consultant, and she is able to have patterns made from clothes of the Civil War period preserved in the V and A. With her guidance, students at the School of Theatre at Wimbledon College of Art, under the direction of Michael Pope, are reconstructing these clothes. To give them the aged, worn look, Andrew hands them out to the volunteers building the commune—an afternoon in sweltering heat adds thirty years to the age of a costume.

Casting has not been so rewarding. There are only a few weeks left to the first day of shooting, and several main parts have still to be filled. We have ploughed through the casting directories, and the photographs held by agents, yet have not found the right people. You may feel that beggars like us cannot be choosers. On the other hand, free from the pressures of the industry, we might as well do our best to avoid compromises as far as we can. There will be enough of them to make once we get going.

Casting in the street has been more successful. Once you get involved in a film of a certain period, your eye picks out perfect characters wherever you go. We found an ideal trooper, with long blond hair (thank heaven for modern hair styles), on a station platform at Chelmsford. An excellent Digger leader at Portobello Road market. A Cromwellian army officer in a tube train. The only setback was when I spotted an ideal Parson Platt on the Piccadilly Line: an impressive man with a clerical collar and a great deal of presence. Somewhat nervously, I approached him, and he turned out to be Chaplain General to the Army.

I wish you could see the film as it exists in our heads. It's really very powerful, with some poignant interludes and some very funny moments. I wish it could be reviewed before we transfer our vision to celluloid, and it all changes. Aesthetic considerations are being given a great deal of attention at the moment—but they will be submerged by hard, practical reality as soon as shooting begins. We need all four seasons, and have to hold a cast together for a whole year.

We have unimaginable problems ahead of us, and I'm sure I shall find this article absurdly optimistic once the picture is under way. Pre-production is the honeymoon period of film-making, when one's illusions are intact and there has been no real difference of opinion. Your friends say, 'How's the picture going?' with genuine curiosity, instead of avoiding your eye because they've seen it. But one year of making a film, however hard it is, is better than eight years without one.

KEVIN BROWNLOW





Andrew Greenwood in 'All the Advantages'



'Duncan Grant at Charleston'

All the advantages

Christopher Mason's *All the Advantages* will be shown at the 1972 London Film Festival.

Christopher Mason is in many ways an old-fashioned person. Ex-painter, ex-Guards officer, film-maker for the last ten years or so; a curious person to emerge now with a first feature, privately financed like his better-known short films (*A Christmas Rose*, *Duncan Grant at Charleston*), and made right on the outer fringe of the British film industry, where people work, if they work at all, for love and very little money. One could say also that *All the Advantages* is an old-fashioned film, but that would scarcely be true. It is old-fashioned in the sense that it is not technically innovative, if that means anything. But its subject-matter, though not much dealt with in British cinema during the last fifteen years or so, is timeless, whether we choose to think so or not.

For in his film Mason has crossed that great lost frontier, that of middle-class drama. True, there was a time when most people in British films were at least comfortably off, no heroine had to do the housework, and the working classes stretched

hazily away in the distance. But those days are long gone: the frontier lies, its outposts supposedly well manned—people still occasionally launch anachronistic attacks on the complacent middle-class British cinema—but actually mouldering in neglect. *Bleak Moments*, the recent British film Christopher Mason most enthusiastically admires, is the first film for years (ever, possibly) to look realistically, unsneeringly, at the poverty-stricken lower middle classes, the unmarried teachers, the shabby-genteel secretary with a house of her own which she is scarcely able to support, the middle-class drop-outs. *All the Advantages* turns its attention in a different direction, that of the barely surviving upper middle class, the world of a house in the country, a maid and a gardener, the world from which renegades are said to have drawn 'all the advantages'.

Both films are primarily about loneliness; both are realistic in their approach. This is perhaps less easy to appreciate in *All the Advantages*. After all, almost everyone in the theatre and the cinema comes from the middle classes; these days, when you get down to it, almost everyone in Britain comes from the middle classes, much as Pasolini has remarked about Italy. But catch anyone admitting it, or giving himself away with a display of precise and detailed knowledge. And yet, the heroines of *Brief Encounter* still exist, even if there is no longer a Boots library where they can change their Georgette Heyer or Nevil Shute, or a super-cinema in the local market town with an organist to lull the matinee audience. They still exist—but who is there now to chronicle their lives, chart their emotions, even admit they are there?

That is where Christopher Mason comes in; and there his peculiar daring. I am not sure that he realises how daring he is in his choice of subject-matter. The background of his characters is, I suppose, very much that of himself and his wife (she is a painter, and niece of Lytton Strachey's Carrington, hence some of the Bloomsbury connections of *Duncan Grant at Charleston*). And since

the background is simply there, without pride or apology, the depiction of people from the same background in the film seems to have come easily, without self-consciousness. The characters are seen as people, not as social phenomena with labels. The plot was suggested by a small item in a newspaper about a boy found dead in a garbage container, wearing women's clothes. No evidence of murder or suicide was found; the whole thing was inexplicable, in that the lad had obviously had 'all the advantages'. What Mason set out to do in his script was to suggest how such a thing could happen, how circumstances, and a group of people none of whom is wicked or monstrous or even notably peculiar, could come together to make a child's life miserable and lonely and neglected; to point out that nobody has all the advantages.

The result is by no means an apologia for the middle classes: it is consistently a story about some people who happen to be middle-class. There is the boy's grandmother, well-intentioned enough but possessive and unconsciously using him as a weapon in the battle with her son and daughter-in-law, stressing always that the boy has no one but her to love him, but only really interested in him as a sort of possession. The boy's mother is scarcely better: forever occupied with great liberal causes, she has no time for the little human problem on her doorstep. While the father, emotionally crippled already by his mother, is incapable of keeping his own marriage together and cannot begin to cope with the problem his son creates. The child dies finally (oddly enough, the really 'true' bit is the least convincing) not from positive cruelty, but from negative neglect.

The film is in many ways appealing. Not least in its air of being amateur—momentarily in the usual derogatory English sense, but more importantly in that it is very evidently a labour of love, a film made straight out of some private compulsion. At Cannes, where it was shown at a prime time in the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, it won golden opinions from a number of French critics on account of its real virtues as well as its adventitious exoticism as part of that weird, inexplicable *cinéma de sa Majesté*. British opinions were more mixed and guarded. What nobody knew, though, was the circumstances of the film's financing and making. What appears as rough-edged in the context of normal commercial filmmaking becomes a triumph of professionalism when you know that the whole film cost just £3,500.

Apparently Christopher Mason had wanted to make the film for some years. And suddenly one evening last year he was talking about it over dinner with an American who announced that he would double whatever amount of money Mason himself could put up. A decision had to be taken then and there, so with some hasty calculation Mason decided that if he sold his house, as he had been thinking of doing, he could put up £1,000. The resulting budget seemed laughable, but at least that much money was there, and by roping in friends and relations he got it shot, budgeting up to rough cut on the assumption that if what he then had to show was any good he would be able to raise the extra money to finish the

film, and if it wasn't then he didn't deserve to. (He was rather amused when in Cannes the producers of the Steven Dwoskin film claimed that they had the least expensive film in the festival, seeing that that was budgeted at a lavish £5,000.)

But then, despite the slightly dilettante sound that 'private finance' has to it, Mason has been a professional film-maker for some years, ready to make more or less whatever people will pay him to make. The list is consequently somewhat bizarre: a series of instructional films, two hours in all, in which Yehudi Menuhin demonstrates his technique of violin teaching; a couple of promotional films for an oil company (which provided an interesting taste of large budget and worldwide shooting); *Sounds Exciting*, a pilot for a possible cassette series on school music; *Fish and Milligan*, a strange, melancholy comedy short which

comes nearer than anything else to showing us the essential Spike Milligan on screen (whence, no doubt, he hated it) and which played with some sex picture at the Jacey Piccadilly, as well as going on general release in Australia. And *Duncan Grant at Charleston*, which he made again with private finance after the Arts Council had turned the idea down—they are now, on the strength of it, eager to back his next film, about the Cornish primitive painter Alfred Wallis.

In Mason's own mind, the development in his work from painting to film is clear and consistent. About ten years ago, while he was painting in Paris, he found he had gone through all the styles up to American Abstract, and still was not satisfied. One day a painter friend suggested that he experiment with animation, so he bought himself a Bolex, made some animated film, then succumbed to the temptation to take the

camera off its stand and into the streets. From the magic of that moment he has never recovered. But films to him are still in the same field of endeavour as painting: 'A feature film presents the same sort of problems as a big scheme of murals, say, in the relation of the parts to the whole, the delicate balance of visual elements—except that with the film you are constructing in time as well as space.'

Now that he has made his debut, however idiosyncratically, in the feature film, does he want to continue, does he see himself joining the commercial cinema? 'I don't know. I'd like to. But I'm only any good at making films, I'm hopeless at selling myself beforehand or the films after I've finished them. Still, I've been reading horror stories lately. I wonder, is Lovecraft out of copyright...?'

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Day Out

Stephen Frears, director of *Gumshoe*, has just finished making a film for BBC Television from a script by Alan Bennett.

Stephen Frears is, in my opinion, the nearest thing this country has to a *nouvelle vague* director; Alan Bennett, in *Time Out's* formula, is 'the closest thing we have to a Restoration dramatist.' The idea for their film, which is to be transmitted on Christmas Eve and is provisionally called *Day Out*, came from one of Bennett's large collection of old photographs: a formal group portrait of the members of a North Country cycling club, one of whose faces struck him as unusually baleful. There isn't much plot, he insists: the film follows the eleven members of a Halifax cycling club on a Sunday excursion to a ruined Cistercian monastery (Fountains Abbey) in July 1911, observing their pleasures (more often anticipated than experienced) and their disappointments, the tensions between them and their peculiar corporate identity.

'It's the same thing as *The Changing Room*, really. I think there's something touching and valuable about the relationship between people who are very different, in some ways very ill-suited, and yet are doing something together. I suppose it's a bit like the boys' school in *Forty Years On*. I think it's a weakness of mine. Because I've never been in that sort of relationship. I probably would hate it if I were. Though I did actually feel it working on the film. I normally work alone, and to be suddenly working with a group of people is very enjoyable. But it isn't hard enough for me to count it as work... That's why I don't act a lot, because the writing seems much harder than the acting.'

In fact, everyone involved in the film seems to have had an unequivocally better time than the characters in it. Although Bennett and Frears separately claim that they don't look at the world in the same way, they both insist that for work to be worthwhile, it must be enjoyable, and are appalled when I cite Hitchcock on the subject of actors. 'I have perhaps a very sloppy view of it,' says Bennett, 'but I do actually see it

in terms of human relationships.' More pragmatically, Frears explains his own reverence for his cast: 'They're the buggers who have to stand up and do it. And I can never understand why they're not in my position anyway.'

The principal difference between them, one of interpretation, was resolved no less pragmatically. Bennett was strongly impressed by *Adalen '31*, and wanted *Day Out* to be a lyrical film, with some of Widerberg's almost dreamlike atmosphere. Frears was worried about making it an indulgent film, in the manner of *Elvira Madigan*. They had, however, agreed early on that it should be in black-and-white. Bennett says he tends anyway to think in black-and-white, because he hasn't got a colour set. Frears felt that it was in general the best way to distinguish between the present day and the period. ('Very few film-makers—Borowczyk, and Truffaut to some extent—have solved the problem of creating a world which doesn't look like 1970'.) More particularly, he had decided early on to film all the cycling from a tracking camera. 'There weren't tarmac roads then, but you can't track on cobble roads. So you

have to track on tarmac and play it down. And the only way you can do this is by going in black-and-white, where nobody actually notices the roads.'

The mood of the film's potentially most lyrical sequence—where a sensitive, club-footed boy wanders off from the group and is invited by a pert, aristocratic girl to tea on the lawn of a country house—was decided by the British climate. 'I think there are four shots in the sunlight, because we got that much sun in the period of about four or five days. One day it was so cold and windy that we had to abandon shooting. I'm afraid you can't make *Adalen '31* in cloudy weather.'

Only one or two deviations from Bennett's original idea of the film were the result of human, rather than divine or technical intervention. 'There are times when Stephen is slightly in love with the actors. For instance, we asked Brian Glover,' (he plays the philosophising mill-worker, Boothroyd) 'to sing "Oh, Maiden, My Maiden!" without realising that he is in fact practically tone deaf. My uncle used to sing it at concerts, so I had a very lyrical idea about it. And I had this shot, which probably would have

'Day Out': Edwardian cycling club. James Cossins, John Normington, David Waller





'Day Out': Ros Elliott, Paul Greenwood, Sharon Campbell

been far too sentimental, of one of them singing the song at the end of the film. But because of Brian singing so badly, we just couldn't have that. Stephen didn't particularly mind, but I did feel that it was a bit of a loss. Though as I said, you lose some things but you get compensations.'

From all the compensations and collaborations, the film emerges as an abrasively nostalgic, finely textured social portrait that evokes comparisons not only with Truffaut ('If you make a film about bicycles before the First World War, it's bound to be influenced by *Jules et Jim*') but also with Renoir, whose scenario for *La Règle du Jeu* Frears had been reading just before they

started shooting. Its fine ironies are observed with a similar warmth and compassion; and there's the same sense of a society divided by class and aware of it in an unmilitant way, which Frears believes to be 'a reasonably truthful description of what life is like.'

He insists that one of the most effective scenes, where the cyclist with 'too much lead in his pencil' makes love to a local girl, works only because of Bennett's idea of having the girl not react at all. In fact he has a disconcerting habit of deflecting every compliment. 'My films aren't photographically flashy, because I come from an arts background as opposed to a photographic one, so I don't know a great deal about what

the camera can do. As for the rest, I would say I had very good teachers. Lindsay and Karel and Albert' (before making *Gumshoe*, Frears was assistant on *If . . .*, *Morgan* and *Charlie Bubbles*) 'are all people whose taste is very discreet.'

Frears feels that right now, with a few obvious exceptions, there seems to be more good work being done in television, and he'd be happy to go on working for the BBC, especially with Innes Lloyd, the producer of what he characteristically refers to as 'Alan's film', and for whom he would like next to shoot a 'wildly anarchic' script by Tony Perrin, a former electrician living in Stoke, about the rich inner lives of Macclesfield bus-drivers. One hopes that the BBC can still afford him, as although he insists that they spent only the money necessary to make the film properly (and it is on 16 mm.), he apparently got through an unprecedented number of dubbing sessions, with the studio stunned to find him fussing about lip-synch. ('If you make a film that is set in 1911 and you make it in Halifax, you can't have traffic on the soundtrack. And that means you can't shoot dialogue, you have to post-synch.')

Alan Bennett observes that he himself was slightly alarmed when he found out how much they were spending, 'and wished that my fee had been tied to the budget.' Exhilarated by the work, Bennett has already roughed out a second script for television, and is tentatively scheduled to adapt *A Handful of Dust* for John Schlesinger. But he doesn't think he'd like to direct. 'I don't think I could bear the running about. During all those breaks, while I was sitting eating myself sick on wonderful Northern cakes, malt breads, parkin, bacon sandwiches, Stephen was actually setting up another shot. I couldn't bear knocking off and not having those enormous meals.'

JAN DAWSON

The Space between film-makers

Roger Graef, an American now living in London, directed the television series, *The Space between Words*. He works as a freelance director, and is also currently involved with the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Every once in a while there is a television programme which the critics hail as a breakthrough. Fifteen years ago it was Denis Mitchell, and a new kind of documentary; yesterday it was *Images*, a cannibalistic exposé of the way film and television stereotypes manipulate the general view. There was a similar critical reaction a few months ago to *The Space between Words* (BBC), a series of five films directed by Roger Graef on the general (and generally debased) theme of communication. Since when, or at least for a few weeks afterwards, the tendency has been for even disparate television documentaries to be judged (misleadingly in Graef's view) according to the criteria which his programmes have ap-

parently established in the minds of the critics. That is unfair to daily television critics, who have an impossible job, but it does say something about the 'ephemeral' nature of television and the understandable attraction for pap-shocked critics of what Graef calls 'accidental outbursts of serious programmes.'

Images, directed by Francis Fuchs, was indeed something different, particularly since it was shown at peak time on the commercial channel. But to anyone familiar with the state of British television, it did little more than regurgitate truisms about the mind-numbing effect of daily repeated images, and in a self-consciously televisual way. What astonishes us about such programmes is the revelation that things have been like this for so long, and that it is only now that we have begun to admit publicly the truth of the situation. In television terms, the space between words is the space between programmes. Or to put it baldly, most television (and most cinema) is bad; but it takes the occasional good television to make us fully realise this and begin to appreciate the medium's limitless potential for helping us see the trees within the wood. Something of the same could be said about Roger Graef's own films, and in

a way that is really what they are all about.

Truth games are seldom played and usually embarrassing, and a lot of people were embarrassed by *The Space between Words*—perhaps because the films are open-ended, indeed offer only a possible beginning. Roger Graef's intention was not of course to suggest that 'communication' is the panacea for communications problems, but that a realisation of how we communicate (why, how and to what purpose we disclose or withhold information; how 'whoever controls information has control of the situation') is a crucial prerequisite for identifying an impasse and then perhaps beginning to communicate usefully. This is of course any amateur psychiatrist's truism; but the extent to which it is ignored in practice is abundantly illustrated in the films. And not only in *Family*, the film which provoked the most controversial reaction because, of course, it seemed so much nearer home than, say, *Politics*, which looked at a U.S. Senate Committee, or *Diplomacy*, which followed the semantic machinations involved in the draughting of a United Nations resolution.

Diplomacy was generally regarded as the most satisfactory film of the series, probably because of its built-in distance between

subject and viewer (the games people play in the Geneva Palais des Nations are ritualised to a degree); and also because the film's subject determines its structure, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and even a curtain call. But in a way this sense of theatre is precisely what makes *Diplomacy* the odd man out in the series. Although Graef is very conscious of the drama in each of the films' situations, and although that drama is often engrossing, the point of the films is that they are beginnings, not ends. If the effect of the series had been merely to induce a kind of cathartic cosiness, Graef would have failed in what he set out to do. 'Because we were observers, not participants, nor intruding to control the action as we might have in a conventional documentary, we ourselves never knew what was coming next, or how things would work out. The films reflect this uncertainty...'

The series developed out of a commission from the BBC to make a film about the English language. From that came the idea of examining the concept of communication by observing its practice in a number of institutions: the family, the school, work, a political committee, an international assembly. Graef and his team first got to know their subjects, tried to encourage them to forget the camera, and shot up to thirty-three hours of film for each programme, which was then sifted to at most eighty minutes. This process obviously implies some degree of editorial intervention, but Graef was concerned to play fair by each of the participants, and thinks that the fly on the wall technique did not inhibit them or make them self-conscious. What seem like occasional interpolations of a point of view, like the close-up of the Assistant Attorney General's fidgeting hands in the *Politics* film, are in fact attributable to technical factors—in this case the camera was shooting in sync and Graef didn't want to lose what was being said but not recorded by the camera.

Graef would be the first to admit that neither the idea of the films nor the method of filming is original. His concern was rather to elicit what he calls a 'sympathetic understanding', to strip away some of the private prejudices and public misconceptions which bedevil everyday human contact. 'Each of the subjects have tended to be subjects which have been mystified, and we wanted to try to demystify them. I don't think you have to have Kenneth Clark explaining sculpture to a television audience; the man who made the sculpture is also someone with something to say.' So in the *Work* film, in which a proposed productivity survey almost causes a strike in an electronics factory, both management and union are very clearly shown to be making decisions on the basis of their conditioned assumptions about each other. In *Family*, it is only when the family agree to talk individually and as a family to a psychiatrist that they begin to understand how the 'difficult' boy's problem is one which involves them all and always has done. And *Diplomacy* pivots on one delegation's assumption about how another delegation will interpret a single ambiguous word (the French, precisely vague as ever if, even after the film, one makes that kind of assumption, would prefer that the proposed disaster relief coordinator

should 'orient' rather than 'direct' relief operations).

There is not space here to discuss the films in detail, nor to raise the ghost of 'objectivity', which was inevitably the stalking horse for those who attacked the series. Graef's reasonable answer is that he was as 'objective' as he knew how, concerned primarily to present data; and one only has to compare *Family* with *Family Life* to see the advantages of even a limited objectivity. As for the charge often levelled against this kind of *cinéma-vérité*, that it makes voyeurists of an audience, Graef consciously set out to encourage identification, and thinks that the justification for this is that many of those who responded to the programmes did so by relating them to their own experience. He admits the danger, particularly in the *Family* film, of vicarious satisfaction (and so self-delusion) derived from a close-up view of other people's problems, but thinks that on balance it is a good thing if people related their own situations to those in the films. A more interesting assault on the professed 'naturalism' of most current television documentary, launched in the current issue of *Screen* by Nicholas Garnham, who argues that the naturalist mode 'supports the status quo by allowing people to believe that things are as they are,' seems to me hardly applicable to Graef's films (though broadly true), which are finally less concerned with things as they are than with illustrating *why* they are, as a necessary first step to changing them.

Ideally, of course, the *Space between Words* films should be seen as they were shot: the *Family* film is the most revealing also because it is the longest. In fact KCET, the Los Angeles station which shared the cost of the series with the BBC, is planning to show the *Family* film in toto, probably in four-hour segments. Roger Graef has been viewing rushes of the films, and he

'Family' and 'Politics' (U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell)



would like to think that the BBC might be persuaded to show longer versions (there is also a 150 minute version of *School*, for instance). Meanwhile he has decided to continue working on a freelance basis and is planning a series on cities, again for BBC and KCET.

He came here after working in the theatre in New York and in television with CBS. Since then he has made a number of documentaries, sponsored films like the prizewinning *One of Them Is Brett*, and films for television, including *Why Save Florence?* (made after that city's devastating floods) and *The Life and Times of John Huston*, an elusive view of an elusive director. Graef's approach to filming (developed when he was working for Allan King Associates, who share his enthusiasm for open-ended film-making) is revealing of someone who is very conscious of the medium's unlimited potential for expanding people's awareness of each other. He made a film about the composer Boulez, he says, because he didn't really understand the man and his work and wanted to find out more—the demystification process again.

His reasons for wanting to go on making this kind of film are confirmed daily. There was, for instance, the businessman who said, yes, the *Work* film was exactly like his own situation, but how did that help him; or the critic in *The Times* who said of the same film that his own communication gap was that he could not see any communication gap. The idea of people collaborating with each other, getting to know and understand the other person's point of view, extends to Graef's working methods. *The Space between Words* he regards as a collaboration (he was sometimes not even in the room when his cameraman, Charles Stewart, was shooting), and he is anxious to continue working this way, valuing the assistant editor's opinion and the sound engineer's apprehensions. He shows rough cuts of his films to as many people as want to see them and encourages their comments.

From this belief in collaboration comes a conviction that one of the real troubles of the British cinema at the moment is that there is little sense of common purpose, or even of common knowledge. Roger Graef knows, for instance, both Stephen Frears and Kevin Brownlow, but he did not know that Brownlow is starting his *Comrade Jacob* film. He sees this lack of communication as revealing the difference between British and European film-makers and film-goers. Would the British film community (if it can be called that) have reacted to a situation like the closure of the Cinémathèque with anything like the communal commitment of French film-makers, critics and public? There is, in other words, a damaging lack of focus in the British film scene, and something ought to be done about it, and can be done. It should never have happened that the National Film Theatre could show *La Hora de los Hornos* to audiences who drifted out to the bar during the interval instead of accepting the film's invitation to debate the issues it raised. The National Film School and the National Film Theatre should be next door to each other in spirit, even if they are geographically far apart. Graef thinks, and he is right, that we should get to know each other better.

DAVID WILSON

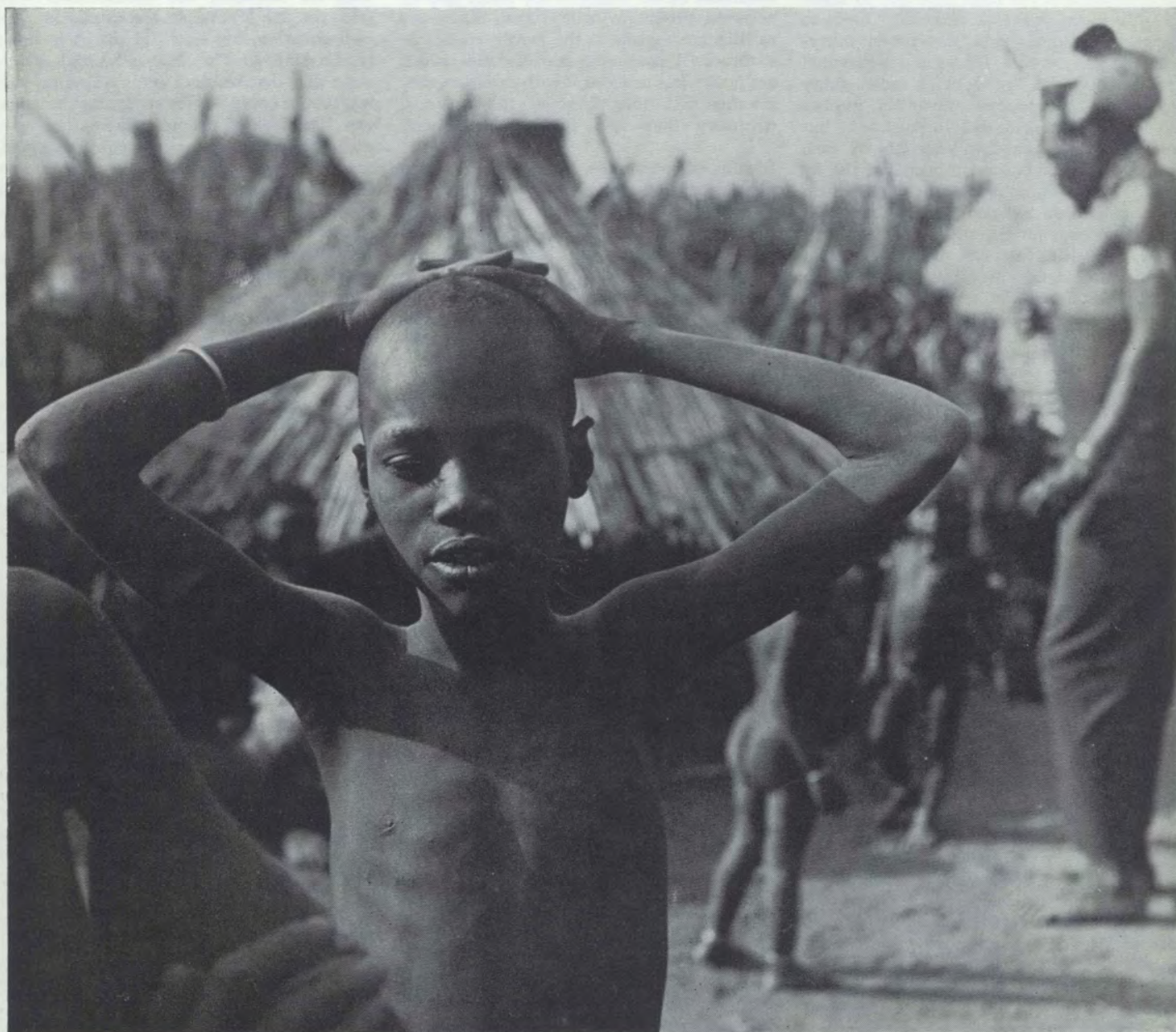
'But Cézanne's apples are a real attempt to let the apple exist in its own separate identity, without transfusing it with personal emotion. Cézanne's great effort was, as it were, to shove the apple away from him, and let it live of itself.'—D. H. Lawrence ('Introduction to His Paintings' in *Selected Essays*, Penguin Books)

'... but its true merit [that of *Bicycle Thieves*] lies elsewhere: in not betraying the essence of things, in allowing them first of all to exist for their own sakes, freely; it is in loving them in their singular individuality.'—André Bazin (*What is Cinema?*, Vol. II)

The resemblances of thought and language are striking. In an introduction to his translation of Bazin's work Hugh Gray notes that the critic's enthusiasm for individuality 'echoes' Duns Scotus, and perhaps it does. Certainly it's of a piece with Bazin's generally Franciscan outlook. Lawrence's predilections are less easily associated with the medieval mind, but even if they could be it's unlikely that this would explain very much. The fact is that when two such different men speak with one voice on the relation of art to life it's because they loved life as much as art; and both knew, instinctively, that beyond all questions of aesthetics or epistemology life only resides in the identity of particular living things.

For Bazin, commitment to identity implied also a commitment to time. When he praises the slow-paced scene of the servant girl awakening and washing herself and making coffee in *Umberto D*, it's the novelty of duration which fires his mind. 'The camera confines itself to watching her doing her little chores,' he says, noting that in this way De Sica defied the 'art of ellipses' which dictated film structure elsewhere. The attempt to find a philosophic rationale for this preference in Henri Bergson is more ingenious than convincing: what phrases like 'a cinema of duration' boil down to is little more than strict adherence to the old unities of time and space, and where these ancient considerations genuinely belong is not in fiction, not even the fiction of neo-realism, but in the observational documentaries of the present day.

OBSERVATION & IDENTITY



'To Live With Herds'

In John Marshall's *Three Domestics*, three police officers visit a woman who says she 'fears for her life'. There has been a lot of drinking: in a small and squalid room a man lies on a couch ignoring police, camera, even the woman herself. The scene would be hard for most cameramen to handle, an irregular three-sided pattern of enquiry and complaint—'he had his foot here, on my throat'—and to see the way Marshall's viewfinder effortlessly squares this triangle, inside the cramped cube of the room, is to see the skill and prescience of a man who leads all others in his mastery of the structural integrity of events.

David MacDougall's film *To Live With Herds* shows the tribal life of the Jie in Uganda. Here also the camera does indeed 'watch', and the scenes have a length which the advocate of durational cinema would surely have admired. Within a fenced enclosure a family is talking, and as their words criss-cross the dusty yard, defining relationships and personalities, the pictorial structure of each image—the surface structure—is reinforced by the deep invisible structure of thought and belief on which tribal society ultimately rests. *Chester Grimes*, by David Hancock and Herb Di Gioia, shows the life of an elderly woodsman in Vermont. He knows personally every fold in the hills and every abandoned habitation, and he talks continuously—the talk of a man thinking out loud. Duration of a kind is found here too: the film is built on a series of complete and rounded episodes in which single camera takes often encapsulate whole events. The art of ellipsis is nowhere evident; what one perceives is a series of unities in time and space, and if a comparison with painting were made it would be less with the apples of Cézanne than with the *Six Persimmons* of Mu Ch'i, a row of intact organic forms embodied within the form of art.

Yet art is a word from which observational film-makers nervously fight shy. 'The beautiful shot takes away from the subject ... it's the worst trap one can fall into.' Thus Jean Rouch, a pioneer of modern techniques. Rouch's work is sometimes pretty rough at the edges, and he could be accused of special pleading. David MacDougall's is very smooth, yet his attitude is broadly similar: the ethnographic film-maker 'does not set out to make "art" ... art is a by-product rather than a goal.' According to the American still photographer Garry Winogrand, 'Photography deals with facts ... I have nothing to say. I believe the event is better than any ideas I could have about it.'

The evidence suggests that Winogrand has plenty of ideas. So why does he speak like this? In denying an interpretative or anecdotal intention he's expressing a general weariness both with the cult of personal expression and conventional story-telling. So much photography consists of non-entity snapping a shutter on entity and trying to raise its status by this act. The self-effacement involved in asserting that 'the event is better' is a way of drawing attention to the 'self' before the lens. At bottom a distaste for smothering the photographed object with the photographer's interpretative ideas or with an arbitrary style derives from a sense that too often interpretation leads only to a loss of identity, the



'Chester Grimes'

very thing photography above all else can preserve. For modern documentary photographers, the camera is an instrument for recording evidence of enduring idiosyncrasies of place and person. To get that evidence they have trained themselves to observe.

As a critical term 'observation' has distinct advantages compared with terms like realism or naturalism. The latter only describe the after-effects of certain narrative or dramatic techniques, but when we think of observation we're bound to consider the prior and practical matter of how cameras record what they see. Were two scenes in an actuality film consecutive or not? How were they shot? Have they been edited? To writers this emphasis on technique may seem peculiar; but film differs from literature in that the criteria we use to judge it are continuously updated by technological change. Realism as expressed in words on paper has changed little over the last 2,000 years: literature stands at a fixed and irreducible distance from reality, the distance of language from whatever it describes. By contrast, photography has a natural affinity for the concrete, and realism in the cinema has been steadily modified by technical developments which have all tended to enlarge the possibilities of observation, to bring the capabilities of cameras and sound-recorders ever closer to the human eye and ear. The result is not just that the 'effect' is more 'naturalistic'. It is that fact can be distinguished from fiction, and true from false.

A zoom, for example, is more than an elastic telescope. It has logical implications as well. While filming in central Australia recently, it was necessary to make plain the relation of the Aboriginal ceremony I was recording to the modern transport which made it possible: in a single sweep I zoomed from a 35-seat Bedford bus to some men on a ceremonial dance ground a hundred yards away. In the past lens changes would have broken this observation in time—a critical disjunction. For an audience can never tell what happened, in camera or cutting-room, when one part of the scene ended and the next began. The inclusiveness of a scene shot with a zoom lens removes all doubt. Watching it on the screen an audience shares with the cameraman one continuous observation which coheres. In such a scene the relation of elements is not merely suggested or implied: it is proved.

To allow others to share observations one has made oneself. This is fundamental to science. And in important respects the aims and procedures of both science and observational film-making are similar. Each admires

the habit of truth. Each tries to keep an open mind. This does not imply the priority of observation to theories or goals. On the contrary: observation refines theories and helps to define goals. It is empirical. It helps to identify mistakes and put them right. It has a passion for the specific.

2

The Island shows the life of Japanese peasants on an island in the Inland Sea. Their lot is miserable. Toil is the order of each relentless day. But what's chiefly of interest about Shindo's film is a combination of three things: a difficult location, a low budget, and the absence of all spoken dialogue, so that the peasants seem preternaturally dour. It's pure conjecture, but it could be that the near impossibility of dragging a ton of 35 mm. equipment about steep hillsides accounts for the lack of any direct location sound; and that the low budget discouraged post-synchronised dialogue.

Desert People also lacks native speech. Between passages of spare and subdued narration general silence prevails. A notable study of primitive life, this hour-long study of the Aborigines of the Australian Western Desert is a testament to human dignity and endurance, and there's no doubt that director Ian Dunlop wants to humanise a subject not noted for humanity in the past. Pictorially he is largely successful; in many scenes the Aborigines 'live of themselves'. But they do not speak for themselves, and many audiences find the net effect almost surrealistic. Amidst landscapes of lunar desolation a remote and unknown people move voicelessly about, and though there's strong evidence to the contrary—scenes of children happily at play—the general impression the film leaves is that not only the desert but its inhabitants are bleak, emotionless, and austere.

Ramparts of Clay tells us a story about Algerian villagers. A number of stonecutters rise in protest against low wages, the army is called in, the rudiments of revolt are quickly quelled. Again, except for an indefinite mumble of Arabic 'rhubarb, rhubarb', nobody speaks. Reviews of Bertuccelli's film have gravely noted the 'sombre existence of the desert dwellers' and the 'long burning silence of their lives'.

Speech maketh man, so why are these men mute? What evidence is there that Japanese peasants and Arabs and Aborigines are so silent? Very little. What they have in common is a social order held

'Desert People': '... not only the desert but its inhabitants are bleak, emotionless and austere'





'Ramparts of Clay'

together by oral tradition, one in which not only daily life but the whole memory of a people is carried along on an unending current of talk. The reason for the pervasive silence appears to be a combination of directorial method and 35 mm. techniques. In *Desert People* a noisy unblimped 35 mm. camera was used which ruled out speech—the only kind of 35 mm. machine then available and manoeuvrable enough for the job. In *Ramparts of Clay* a blimped and silent camera may have been used, in which case the recording of speech might theoretically have been possible. But it would have been pointless to try to do so, because the resolutely authoritarian camera style would have stifled every word. Repeated tracking shots sweeping along passages and walls, through doors, shots which always end on people miraculously poised as if waiting for us to arrive, shots which smoothly circumambulate the heroes and heroines on steel tracks, these all mean only one thing: that the wretched 'desert dwellers' who appear in them have been virtually nailed down to keep them in place while the cameras roll and pan and pirouette, and long before the day is over even the most talkative Arab will hardly utter one word. Direction inhibits: observation frees.

So the message of all these speechless people is fairly simple. It's that 'realism' in ethnographic and quasi-ethnographic films—a genre in which there's always a wide cultural gap between those before the cameras and those behind—is a direct reflection of specific machinery and techniques. This connection is something ethnographic film-makers have been aware of from the beginning. Thus in 1901 we find Sir

Baldwin Spencer yearning for a panning mechanism so that he could follow Aboriginal dancers when they danced out of the side of his frame. And we find Flaherty making early use of just such a device on his Akeley camera only a few years later.

These men made a remarkable start; but despite their work the observational film advanced little in the following years. This was partly because no radically new equipment was developed. But no one was interested in developing it, for in the 1920s and 1930s observation was held to be less important and certainly less worthy than imaginative interpretation. Not the identity of the subject but its hidden meaning as discerned and expressed by the filmmaker: this was what mattered. The results were more or less didactic or reportorial if British or American (*Song of Ceylon*, *The River*), propagandist if German or Russian (*Triumph of the Will*, *The Sixth Part of the World*). You don't turn to such films to discover a unique personal or cultural self as you do with *Nanook of the North*. You turn to them to find how gifted journalists used film to express the issues and ideologies of the day. The development which marked a reviving concern with seeing rather than assertion did not derive from documentary: it came with the exploration of deep focus photography found in *Citizen Kane*.

This was a reaction against the photography of the day in which focus was more often soft than deep. Scene complexity or richness, anything which approached the richness of reality itself, this only hampered the telling of the tale. And if the conventions were romantic the formulas were reduction-

ist. They reduced the complex to the simple, the complete to the incomplete, the whole to a series of fragmentary parts called close-ups whose chief function was flatteringly to display the 'star'. The Hollywood film itself was largely a vehicle for the star, and the essence of stardom was that the complexity of a whole being was reduced to something simple and idealised, an iconic image seen always at a certain angle to the camera and the lights. Whole sequences could be composed from fragments, close-ups of faces, hands and feet,* with the result that acting technique became superfluous. 'I don't know how to act,' complains Sergius in Mailer's novel *The Deer Park*, only to be quickly reassured by Lulu the movie star: 'There's nothing to learn. If you're wooden he (the director) will make it seem like sincerity. If you're self-conscious, he'll know tricks to make you look like a small-town boy. And if you ruin a scene . . . Well, you know, they always shoot protection. With the way they work you could walk through the part.'

And many did. Such a way of working saved the day for the likes of Sergius, but it could sabotage the good actor and in special cases might even destroy his art. Louise Brooks has explained why she prefers the stage W. C. Fields she knew to the man the world knows from the screen: 'On stage the

*I take the most agile hands of one, the fastest and the most graceful legs of another, from a third person I take the handsomest and the most expressive head, and by editing I create an entirely new perfect man.'—Dziga Vertov, 1922. Wherever total control is necessary the manipulative tradition has its advocates.



Men at war in 'Dead Birds'

audience saw all of him all the time.' Whereas in the cinema they saw him piece by piece. Fields was dismembered by medium shots, two-shots and close-ups. 'Every time the camera drew closer it cut off another piece and deprived him of some comic effect.' Fields could only 'curse the finished film, seeing his timing ruined by haphazard cuts.'

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the use of wide-angle lenses and the newly introduced zoom was combined with lightweight 16 mm. cameras: at this point the real revolution in observational filming began. Those who had in fact pioneered the development of the new machinery, Richard Leacock and the people at the Canadian Film Board, led the way, but it was where the gap was widest between observer and subject—in ethnographic film—that the new techniques were most needed. Jean Rouch saw his chance and made the most of his opportunities: in his work the gap is very nearly closed. And it is in the tradition established by Rouch that the finest ethnographic work is still being done.

When discussing technique, the stress has so far been on cameras. But whatever pains are taken photographically to honour the integrity of events, all is lost unless editors observe the same rules as cameramen. To ensure this happens most ethnographic filmmakers edit their work themselves, and in this respect the recent *To Live With Herds* offers an admirable harmony of photographic and editorial styles. It is built up of substantial intact events and coherent units of conversation. The conversations often take us into an inner world of memory and feeling; in few other films do tribal people speak so naturally and informally about themselves.

In such work there can be no 'haphazard cuts'. The cuts follow the continuity revealed by the camerawork, and there's very little haphazard about that.

Wide and inclusive views, long scenes, editorial integrity: all of these give continuity to action and context to events. That is why they have become a feature not only of modern social documentary but of social drama as well. For the critic of social drama, the more that can be seen of each character's behaviour within a group the more credible the dramatic relationship. For the observational film-maker, the more social data packed within the frame the more valid the generalisations to be derived. The dramatist seeks to persuade in order to justify the suspension of disbelief. The observational film-maker seeks to prove in order to validate belief. Both have found the illusive tendencies of old-style film structure unsatisfactory, and though one is concerned with persuasion and the other with proof, they have arrived at similar rules for testing each.

3

Animals may observe, but only men interpret—if by interpretation we mean the organisation of meaning into language. And if one sides with the rest of the animal kingdom and dares question the transformation of matter into symbolic meaning, it's because there's so much evidence of the interpreter's ambiguous role. Susan Sontag had this in mind when she declared: 'Interpretation is the revenge of intellect upon the world.' And long before this ringing judgment we had been quietly

warned, *traduire est trahir*. This adage also suggests that the central problem is that of language and its conventions, highly relevant in that the common failing of the films discussed below is their impatience to forgo reality in an enthusiasm for verbal and literary forms. Besides, criticism has for so long lopsidedly favoured interpretation that some correction is due. In *The Technique of Film Editing* (1953) Karel Reisz spoke for a generation when he said: 'The high esteem in which documentary films as a genre are generally held is due mainly to the films which have probed beneath the surface of mere observation and have tried to convey something of the emotional overtones and significance of natural themes. Dovzhenko, Flaherty, Ivens and Wright spring to mind immediately as examples of this more profound approach to reality.' (My italics.)

We've seen that the style of *Ramparts of Clay* is intrinsically hostile to observation. But this style has its *raison d'être*; it's the chosen instrument of a man anxious to express a 'more profound approach to reality' of a special kind. A clue to the kind itself appears in the form of an introductory quotation from Fanon telling us that the main problem in underdeveloped countries is the parasitic, neo-colonial bourgeoisie. Once we've had time to digest this, we're introduced to Rima, the 17-year-old girl through whose eyes we are supposed to see Algerian life. But there's a jarring disconnection. What has the quotation to do with Rima? What has this abstract analysis to do with the consciousness of a young girl? Fanon's words baldly state what the film itself should undertake to prove. But proof



Left and below left: Fassbinder's *'The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant'*

FESTIVALS 1972



Berlin

'The trouble with Oakland,' Gertrude Stein cryptically remarked of her birthplace, 'is that there's no *there* there.' To the casual visitor (and it's an impression inevitably heightened by the polyglot congress of an international festival), the same applies to West Berlin. An unreal, no-man's-land city, politely receptive to every Allied influence, with salesmen, usherettes and policemen courteous in four languages and expressionless in all of them, it most resembles a gigantic UNESCO supermarket.

Sadly, if appropriately, it was the spirit of the city which pervaded the programme of the 22nd Filmfestspiele: a depressing catalogue of determinedly 'international' films,

often of interest only as rather morbid examples of cross-fertilisation or cases of vocational aberration, with 'art-house' directors seemingly bending over backwards to achieve commercial acceptability, and commercial film-makers striving clamorously for 'artistic' effects. Polanski's work was represented by his Jackie Stewart documentary; Henning Carlsen, in *Oh, to Be on the Bandwagon!*, made a heavy-handed effort to transpose Carné's down-and-out dreamland to a contemporary Danish setting. And while *The Hospital*, Arthur Hiller's maudlin attempt to assimilate the cynicism of *M*A*S*H* to the schmaltz of his own *Love Story*, was on show as an American entry, Japanese director Koichi Saito borrowed both the *Love Story* formula and the worst excesses of *A Man and a Woman* to produce in *The Rendezvous* the

most embarrassing of brief encounters to date. A different class of international embarrassment was Pedro Olea's *The House without Frontiers*, involving Viveca Lindfors (actively) and Geraldine Chaplin (passively) in some salacious torturing evidently intended as a heavily allegorical denunciation of Franco's regime.

Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* shone out alone as a work of untarnished originality. Like his *Warning of a Holy Whore*, it's a chamber piece, almost Japanese in its hermetic formalism. Its setting is the designer-heroine's studio apartment, dominated by life-size mannequins, by the outsize brass bed in which she eats, works and loves, and by a huge *trompe-l'oeil* mural: a brazenly artificial world whose occupants (Petra and her monosyllabic factotum Marlene), dressed in Edwardian clothes and punctuating their tense silences by playing well-worn 1950s pop songs on a futuristic hi-fi, acknowledge no reality beyond their plate-glass outer wall. The sado-masochistic balance of the household is tipped by the arrival (also in anachronistic dress) of Karin, a refugee from marriage who inspires the icily controlled Petra to outbursts of possessive passion and temporary insanity before returning to the world of men. (It's one of the film's many un-commented ironies that the only males in sight are the gigantic nudes on the mural which lower, like presiding deities, over all the Lesbian love scenes.) The dramatic life of the film—the closest comparison is fancy-dress Strindberg—springs from the precise intersection of articulated and unspoken passions. Its long, lingering takes most often observe Karin and Petra conversing or caressing on a diagonal in the foreground, while the silent Marlene types or sketches in some far, dark corner of the screen. Impeccable, stylised performances are reinforced by a tightly theatrical construction—a formal division into five 'acts', each signalled by a dissolve into blackness and by Petra's appearance in a different coloured wig.

If Fassbinder's film offered a brilliant demonstration of minimal ingredients used to maximum effect, the reverse was true of Pasolini's *Canterbury Tales*. With—literally—only an occasional nod to Chaucer (Pasolini, in the poet's role, is at one point caught napping over his manuscript), the film sprawls from one scatological incident to the next, rooted in the profane until the final shot reveals the hitherto unexplained characters as pilgrims grouped beneath the Canterbury spire. Its tone recalls the old joke about the Ecumenical Council decreeing that it's all right to kiss a nun provided you don't get into the habit. And while it's a relief to learn that the hastily compiled, Italian dialect version screened in Berlin is not the definitive one (the English version will be an hour longer, with a framing prologue and, hopefully, a structure), it seemed an appropriate recipient for the main Festival's main prize.

Fortunately, Berlin now boasts a second festival, the socially oriented International Forum of Young Cinema. The emphasis here was Marxist rather than bandwagon-

opportunistic; and with the cultural pact signed too late to admit Eastern bloc films this year, it was perhaps inevitable that the Third World should provide not only many of the films, but also most of the prototypes. Ousmane Sembene's elegantly photographed **Emitai** offered a particularly sophisticated treatment of the class struggle, using a native cast recruited on location to dramatise a Senegalese village's abortive resistance in 1944 to the French Army's attempt to requisition the rice crop. The film is the more effective as propaganda for being scrupulously fair to both sides, and there's a marvellously humorous moment when a black recruit fails to convince an incredulous colleague that the two-star de Gaulle has been promoted over the four-star Pétain.

Perhaps the Forum's strangest surprise was René Allio's departure from intimate subjects in **The Camisards**, a colourfully costumed epic about the Protestant band who took to the hills, Guevara-style, after the Edict of Nantes was revoked. The film at times seems over-conscious of its contemporary relevance (the mountain encampment looks awfully like a love-in from *Woodstock*), as if Allio were struggling to bend Glauber Rocha's techniques to his own domestic history. He might more profitably have looked to less exotic inspiration: the Festival's Fairbanks retrospective offered a blueprint for a guerrilla cinema at once humorous and morally unimpeachable.

The Forum's great revelation, originally made for German TV, was Klaus Emmerich's **Rosa and Lin**, a modest feature about an 'ideal' family whose home looks like a Habitat catalogue. Observing the insidiousness of a certain reflex liberalism (children escorted from sterile rooms to splash compulsorily in the paint at a play-group; a teacher turning obscene graffiti into the basis for an earnest lecture on sex education), the film tips unobtrusively from caustic realism to black nightmare. As his model offspring express their rebellion in silent acts of escalating aggression—the 10-year-old boy brutally beats up a class-mate, his 6-year-old sister hangs her pet hamster—the long-haired father becomes increasingly authoritarian, provoking the outrageous climax in which, after demolishing the trendy home with cans of spray paint, the children stab their parents to death with well-aimed darts.

But Berlin's biggest treat—turned down by the Festival on a bureaucratic technicality and only unofficially screened by the Forum—was Satyajit Ray's **Company Limited**. It charts the moral crisis of an ambitious executive (once a Shakespeare scholar) who provokes a strike in order to safeguard both his firm's export contracts and his own promotion. But the overt political theme—the corruption of big business—is uniquely slanted by Ray's observation of the curious inefficiency of India's mock-Western empire-builders. The central drama is brought about by defective workmanship in the factory; the neon sign to which the hero escorts his sister-in-law on their night out is literally on the blink; his wife's pride in their penthouse apartment seems misplaced once we've noticed that both the lift and the telephone habitually fail to work; and the producer of the firm's commercial (Ray sending up his origins, with a cliché-ridden and crudely processed colour

insert) insists that its precise running time is more or less one minute. With a complex of agonisingly ambivalent relationships, and no less agonising visits to Calcutta's country-club, race-course and Hawaiian striptease, *Company Limited* is at once Ray's finest film in years and a reminder that Berlin does not stand alone at the cultural crossroads.

JAN DAWSON

Edinburgh

There was no mistaking the main Edinburgh policy this year: an attempt to get through more films in three weeks than are shown at all the other international festivals put together. Over 120 features were programmed, in the early hours of the morning if need be, and they were accompanied by uncountable numbers of shorts assembled from sources as diverse as the Cairo Film Society and Leeds University. The afternoons of the Festival's third week were given over completely to this torrent of briefer essays and experiments, preceding nightly showings of material distributed through Politkino—Jean-Marie Straub, early Rocha, late Godard, and similar examples of the film-maker as revolutionary. If it all resembled a massive viewing session for Scottish film societies, this was partly, one suspected, because there are still too few alternative chances for audiences in Scotland to see anything but commercial pictures.

One such commercial hit, *Fritz the Cat*, was showing in all its flagrant scurrility at Edinburgh's local ABC during the Festival, demonstrating that times had undoubtedly changed since the occasion, not so long ago, when Edinburgh programmes were nearly censored by Caledonian decencies. True, someone did complain after this year's screening of a silent documentary consisting entirely of vaginal close-ups, an astonishing landscape of what in such proximity resembled overcooked rashers of bacon,

but the complaint turned out to be that Leni Riefenstahl's *Das blaue Licht*, appearing somewhat timidly in the same programme, was both incomplete and shown at the wrong speed. With its first quarter-century safely behind it, Edinburgh had certainly come of age.

Sheer quantity aside, however, the Festival gave the impression of searching for an identity in the wake of several bandwagons. Although a preference could be detected for films of protest, this might be argued as an inevitable reflection of the current international mood. Indeed, Losey introduced his **Assassination of Trotsky** at Edinburgh with the contention that it's impossible *not* to make political films today; and bands of Trotskyites proved him right by attending the screening with leaflets which challenged not his style but his political standpoint ('he provides a political cover for those who carry on Stalin's work; it is false to the core').

Taking its cue from Cannes, the Festival set up a predictable platform for Women's Liberation, whose supporters retired occasionally into secret and probably chauvinistic discussion, but whose case rested unevenly on a week of films by women directors. It was a useful if inconclusive round-up, ranging from more familiar entries like Judit Elek's **Lady from Constantinople** and Nelly Kaplan's **La Fiancée du Pirate**, through lumbering oddities like Vera Chytilova's picturesque **Fruit of Paradise** and Nina Companeez's irritating **Faustine et le bel Été** to a genuine revelation in Dorothy Arzner's 1940 production **Dance, Girl, Dance**. There was a lot of fuss about Jane Arden's film of her own play *Holocaust*, heavily retitled **The Other Side of the Underneath**, in which the causes and consequences of female schizophrenia are fiercely and elaborately explored, but the excitement seemed to me misplaced. With its weeping interrogations, flood of sexual and religious symbols (culminating in a feminine crucifixion), and bizarre Felliniesque images, the film is an attention

'Company Limited': Barun Chanda, Sharmila Tagore





Joss Ackland in 'England Made Me', Peter Duffell's film based on the Graham Greene novel

getter, but it needs drastic pruning and a less cluttered soundtrack. What comes across at the moment looks more like naked hysteria than any constructive point of view.

The plight of women as sex objects, and by extension the problem of their intellectual survival, finds a clearer definition in what was for me the hit of the Festival, Steve Dwoskin's *Dyn Amo*. Continuing the dialogues of Dwoskin's earlier shorts, the film stares into the faces of four girls on the tiny, tatty stage of what is evidently a strip club; one after another they begin their routines, miserable, mechanical, and bored, until gradually the presence of the camera encourages them to react against the deplorable indignities to which they have submitted and they fix us with their eyes for minutes on end in silent pleas for help.

The impact of a static image undergoing only the subtlest changes probably depends on how many films of the type one has seen (it's a well-tried routine in underground film-making), but with *Dyn Amo* the experience is intense and hallucinatory, forcing the audience to confront its own emotions as well as those of the tragic faces that fill the screen. The Women's Liberationists would probably disagree, in that Dwoskin is too much of a primitive, but I think he and his eloquent cast argue their cause as persuasively as either sex could wish, and without speaking a word. The whole argument, in fact, that women can make little headway in the film industry, seems to ignore their traditional potency on the screen itself. It may have been coincidence, but there was hardly a film at Edinburgh that didn't revolve around the importance—and dominance—of the female.

If a secondary theme was needed, the Festival found it in Kris Kristofferson's song 'Help Me Make It Through the Night', as used by John Huston for *Fat City*, this year's opening film. Kristofferson's metaphor, immaculately expanded by Stacy Keach's twilight search for reassuring company, found echoes in the films that followed—in *Ten Days' Wonder*, in *Images*, in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, in

Teshigahara's *Summer Soldiers* and Barbara Loden's *Wanda*. If the night involved wasn't social or emotional, it was ideological, as in Giuliano Montaldo's *Sacco and Vanzetti* or Kazimierz Kutz's *Pearl in the Crown*, two vastly different treatments of an almost identical struggle. Montaldo's film, based on the famous trial in the 1920s in America of two Italians accused of murder, is a jumble of actors and styles; documentary shots from the time are intermingled with Gian Maria Volonté being prosecuted by Cyril Cusack and defended by Milo O'Shea while, even more surprisingly, Geoffrey Keen sits in judgment in the American courtroom. The dubbing has carefully replaced the word 'anarchist' (a label that ensured the execution of the original innocents) with the description 'radical', a curious adjustment that renders the whole film even more unreal.

The Kutz film has its lapses but manages to straddle them with more flair. *Pearl in the Crown* starts off with Dovzhenko lyricism at the glowing white home of a loving young couple and their urchin sons, and then buries itself at the bottom of a coalmine where the men refuse to come up until the continuance of the mine is guaranteed by its owners. Kutz combines Russian imagery with scenes that seem to have been deliberately modelled on *Metropolis*—particularly when the stygian tide of men, back on the surface at last, heaves into the brilliant glare of the capitalist sanctuary to confirm their almost impossible victory. It rings mightily of contrivance, but when all else fails Kutz pulls through on his sense of the spectacular.

The same might be said of Sam Fuller, whose latest film was the Festival's most eagerly awaited scoop: since presenting the first major retrospective of Fuller's work in 1969, Edinburgh has regarded him almost as its own invention. Made entirely in West Germany, *Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street* is everything that Fuller fans could wish except an undisputed success. It has so many classic Fuller situations as to be almost the complete retrospective in itself—the double agent, the clash of cultures, the

carnival, the unexpected locations, the ritualistic final duel. The story, a matter of photographs used for political blackmail, is insignificant beside the vocabulary with which it is told, spiced these days with Fuller's jokes for his fans (extracts, for example, from *Rio Bravo* and *Alphaville*); there's a beautifully constructed chase sequence, employing some of Fuller's unmatched long shots, and plenty of fun with the fencing-school hideout of the villainous mastermind. But the grip slackens puzzlingly at times (the despatch of the villain is clumsily done), while the performance of Christa Lang as the essential love interest, all narrowed eyes and wry smiles, cries out for suppression beside the Fullertian impassivity of everyone else. The best of Fuller, one hopes, is yet to come.

Edinburgh's retrospective discovery this year was Douglas Sirk, who at 72 expressed little desire to return to the profession he discarded without regret on the completion of *Imitation of Life* in 1958. Side by side, the Sirk films were incredible, glowing, precise, consistent. Using colours that don't seem to exist any more, he could take the most forbidding melodrama and make it function effortlessly, a polished, logical pattern with no loose ends. The most banal of yarns, like *Take Me to Town* (Ann Sheridan, showgirl, falls for Sterling Hayden, preacher), comes up bright and crisp in Sirk's hands; he deserves a lot of fresh attention now Edinburgh has shown the way.

At the other end of the Hollywood scale, Paul Morrissey is beginning to show signs of meriting the attention that has been lavished on *Flesh* and *Trash* with the latest Warhol production, *Heat*. In this one, the long-suffering Joe (the cinema's clearest justification for a Men's Liberation movement since Stan Laurel) is bounced yet again from one rapacious female to another in absentminded pursuit of stardom. With something of a Valentino cut to his long hair, he decorates the Hollywood mansion of an actress fast disappearing into obscurity, who is convinced she can help him into the

'Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street': Glenn Corbett, Anton Diffring



big time. Morrissey's camera and editing are slightly less stark than usual, but it's the dialogue in *Heat* that marks the greatest improvement, delivered with some splendid snap and crackle by Sylvia Miles. 'Child star?' she gasps at her ex-husband's reference to his new boy friend, 'He hasn't been a child since Barrymore!' The packed Festival audience took that one right kindly.

Sirk and Morrissey, Fuller and Chabrol—perhaps one might sum up Edinburgh as a festival of high drama. That would certainly allow for Ustinov's performance in the extremes of *Hammersmith is Out*, for the uninhibited mugging of Sheila White in Nelly Kaplan's inconsequential but enjoyable *Papa les Petits Bateaux*, and for the mind-wrenching activities of Jodorowsky in his own blood-strewn *El Topo*. And all the stops were out in Joe Viola's *The Hot Box*, a no-nonsense piece of exploitation from the Corman stable featuring four nurses in the clutches of jungle revolutionaries and everything happening, battles and all, at a tremendous pace and on a quite impressive scale. Yet there were muter successes, too: Peter Duffell's careful study of intrigue in Nazi Germany, with excellent performances all round, *England Made Me*; Jörn Donner's return to form with *Anna*, a sad, meditative account of the acceptance of middle age; and, most hopefully of all, Bill Douglas' reconstruction of his own background, *My Childhood*, a disciplined and sensitive achievement which Edinburgh greeted delightedly as another legitimate Scottish triumph. Even if unable to decide which bandwagon to join, the Festival was evidently content to cheer them all impartially on their way.

PHILIP STRICK

Venice

Film festivals are like nightmares—an endless trip through a surfeit of celluloid images. And the waking memories are fragmented, refracted through a prism of hazy impressions. Perhaps that's why the one clear, resonant memory of Venice this year was not from a film at all, but the sound of Italian children laughing their way through *il tutto Chaplin*, just one of the festival's admirably comprehensive retrospectives. Here at least is a universal language. Everywhere else, with *Cabaret* rubbing shoulders with a Russian war epic and a Chinese revolutionary ballet merging into *Clockwork Orange*, the global village splinters and divides. A festival is no longer a place for international trend-spotting, which is probably a good thing. But it's still an event which inevitably prompts hasty judgment and unreasonable preference, where the kaleidoscope of images makes it possible only to register impressions.

In the claustrophobic conditions of a festival which had several hundred films to offer, the impressions are often half-formed. To take one obvious difficulty, substantial critical fallacies have been founded on an incomplete understanding of subtitled films. This critical stumbling-block was succinctly illustrated here by a British film, the Harold Becker/Alan Sillitoe *The Ragman's Daughter*, which had a fairly

enthusiastic reception. Impossible to explain to a German colleague why its woefully inaccurate social nuances (nouveau riche girl with Kensington accent rides her horse down a solidly working-class Nottingham street and no one bats an eyelid) would be jumped on by any British critic born north of the Wash. International misunderstanding is endemic at festivals. And Venice this year was trying hard to get through to everyone.

Not everyone, though, was receptive. As last year, several Italian directors boycotted the festival, and at the eleventh hour they were joined by Godard and Gorin, who withdrew *Tout Va Bien* from the Lido and offered it to a counter-festival set up in Venice proper. Their reasons were somewhat obscured by an unhelpful exchange of telegrams, particularly since this year the festival countered one of the perennial complaints by organising public screenings in and around the city. The counter-festival began with Bellocchio's *In Nome del Padre* (announced too late for most people to see it), and as I write is planning to show and debate recent Italian films by directors who include Marco Ferreri, Fabio Carpi and Giuseppe Bertolucci. Meanwhile, with five days to go, the official festival offers the promise of Ray's *Company Ltd*, Carmelo Bene's *Salome*, Ken Russell's *Savage Messiah*, and films by Conrad Rooks, Istvan Gaal and Frank Perry.

So far, it has been a story of disappointment, confirmation and not much revelation. Among the confirmations was Fassbinder's *The Merchant of Four Seasons*. In subject, Fassbinder's new film is essentially a reprise of his earlier *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*. An unassuming little man, oppressed since childhood by women, is thrown out of the police force (again because of a woman) and sets up on his own selling fruit from a barrow. All goes well until his wife's enduring passivity provokes a heart attack. He is forced to take on a colleague, catches him short-changing with the wife's connivance, and finally kills himself with drink while his family watches. The journey from disgruntlement to despair is characteristically direct. There is no extraneous periphery: Fassbinder's style is his substance. Again the groupings are theatrical, the dialogue unshaded, the settings contracted into areas of conflict; and here there is an implied compliment to Sirk at Universal in the primary colour tones and starkly contrasted lighting. Emotion is rendered by decor—or often by lack of decor—and, interestingly, the only sympathetic woman in the film wears red lips and shoulder-padded suits.

As usual, Fassbinder's dynamic packs dynamite. Behind the controlled convolutions of the everyday, the family ritual whose vicious circle blunts even modest ambition, lurks the threat of an explosion. The fruitseller is basically a gentle man, but banality has its limit; his final act of self-destruction comes after a family dinner party, where the desultory conversation is of money, a new house, family dissension. The toleration level suddenly dips beyond withdrawal; and the bourgeois sensibility is shattered, as it only can be, by the shock tactic. Fassbinder's vision is bleak, but leavened throughout by his perverse and very conscious self-mockery. The fruitseller, explaining to his hired man how to shout

his wares, tells him to put more expression in his voice; and then proceeds to spy on him, checking every transaction to the last pfennig, a wry comment on his own stilted ambition. Trying to rouse his wife from more than passive interest in him as breadwinner, he plays a sentimental Italian pop song, instant nostalgia for perhaps one moment of happiness. But the film's implication is that the real happiness might have been elsewhere, with the woman who shows up at his funeral with a bunch of red roses.

Fassbinder's films are often about the erosion of promise. The difference here is that he seems closer to his characters, granting them more than the status of pawns in a game controlled by himself. Perhaps for this reason, many people rate this his best film (indeed, it has been called the best German film since the war). Also for this reason I find it less satisfying than some of his work, mainly because Fassbinder's strength has always seemed to be the distance he keeps between himself and his characters. The ritual perpetual motion of a film like *Katzelmacher* is here replaced by something approaching involvement; and involvement is no part of ritual.

Another kind of ritual dominates Marguerite Duras' *Nathalie Granger*. The setting is a country house, familiar Duras territory. A woman lives here with her husband (briefly glimpsed and then forgotten), two daughters and another woman, never identified, who occasionally wanders into the garden to burn wood or rake weeds from the pond. Inside the house passivity is all, communication minimal; the women sit in silence, their glazed expressions registering an emotional blank. We are told nothing about them, and they certainly reveal nothing of themselves. But then nothingness is a condition of the Duras milieu, and perhaps all is not what it seems. One of the children, we learn, is violent at school, but at home she seems a model of docility. The house, with its immense garden stretching down to the woods beyond, also appears mysteriously to front on to a busy road.

As in *Destroy, She Says*, Duras plays on the menace of appearances. Finding nothing to record in the faces of the women (Lucia Bose and Jeanne Moreau, smouldering like dying embers), the camera lingers on objects, investing them with an unnerving sense of life. The only tangible menace derives from intermittent radio announcements about murderers on the run, and that is soon dispensed with (but then why does one of the women pointedly burn the day's newspaper, if not to suggest that there may be more to it than that?). No one intrudes into this bleak house except a harmless commercial traveller, whose sales spiel is slowly deflated by the women's glacial silence and instantly squashed by his discovery that they already have the washing-machine he is trying to sell them. Significantly perhaps, it is he who sloughs his skin and confesses his despair; for the women there is no such catharsis, only the permanence of death in life. After the vapid aesthetics of *Jaune le Soleil*, Duras seems here to have discovered a style and a tempo for her very particular concern with the illusion of tranquillity.

Women directors were much in evidence,

though mercifully there was no show of segregation. The critical trap here is that indulgence naturally but irrelevantly clouds judgment: if the message is right, no matter about the film as film. So an Italian film, Elda Tattoli's **Pianeta Venere**, got more than its due, for all that it had one of those moments which ought to go into an anthology of lunatic cinema: a little girl, finding a liberating hole in the wire fence which keeps her in her place, runs up a hill to be patted on the head by a beatific assembly of patriarchs from Marx to Mao, and all to the accompaniment of a Chinese revolutionary hymn.

Women, fifteen of them, were also the stars of the official Russian entry, **How Quiet the Dawn**, an interminable piece of epic kitsch which had several scenes ripe for that anthology. Infinitely better was Larissa Shepitko's **You and Me**, shown in the young directors' section. An elusive account of a medical scientist's crisis of maladjustment in contemporary Russia, this elliptical film revealed a real sensitivity in its treatment of a familiar Russian preoccupation—how to reconcile intellectual achievement with emotional satisfaction. Overstrained at times, it is nevertheless a refreshingly individual film, and one would like to see it shown in Britain, where subtitles might clarify some of the more elusive resonances.

It was an unfortunate irony that this auto-critical Russian film should have been shown a few days after the head of Soviet cinematography was dismissed for abandoning the socialist realist mode. No such problems, evidently, in Yugoslavia, whose cinema continues to have a mind of its own, to judge from Bata Cengic's **Scenes from the Life of Shock Workers**. Cengic clearly owes something to Makavejev, not least an ambiguous slant on the heroes of recent history; but in the way he assembles this collage of re-enactment, newsreel, fact and fantasy he is very much his own man. For one thing, he doesn't disguise genuine admiration for these champion miners and the physical effort of their Stakhanovite labours. Disillusionment sets in only with the personality cult erected round the team leader as he is fêted and photographed and rewarded with a May Day trip to Moscow. By the end of the film the miners are left with their memories, forgotten heroes unheeded by everyone from Tito to their own children. There's a suggestion that there may be a kind of continuity of effort from one generation to the next; but the prevailing tone is one of regret for a time when effort was its own reward. It's a nostalgia conveyed without rancour: Cengic is no less anarchic than Makavejev, but his juxtapositions are less perverse, his offbeat humour less whimsically malevolent.

Cengic's film is evidently not unlike his previous work. **Os Inconfidentes**, by the Brazilian Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, couldn't be less like his delirious **Macunaima**. Andrade's new film is a meditation on revolution, and the human fallibility which confounds its achievement. The setting is 17th-century Brazil, where a motley group of soldiers and intellectuals conspire to overthrow their Portuguese rulers. The revolution is abortive, hamstrung by its own indecision. What follows is pure theatre, as the imprisoned conspirators deny responsi-



Family grouping in Oshima's *'Dear Summer Sister'*

bility, accuse each other and stumble through verbal labyrinths of self-deception. The style is appropriately declamatory; and the fascination is in the intrigues and contradictions of a series of weighty monologues. Until the end, that is, when the camera stunningly tilts down from the execution of one of the plotters to reveal modern schoolchildren applauding on the grass below. We then see a contemporary celebration of the conspirator hero, and the film ends with a butcher's knife hacking through red meat. An astonishing *coup de théâtre*, with a devastating sting in the tail.

An innovation at Venice this year was a kind of critics' choice section: films selected by appointed critics from participant countries. Bill Douglas' **My Childhood**, the British choice, has yet to be shown, but apart from Mehrjui's **The Postman** and the Turkish Yilmaz Guney's **Agit** (an impressively staged film about mountain smug-

glers), there has been little of real interest in this section. Elsewhere it has largely been a case of unfulfilled paper promise. The Rumanian **Felix and Otilia**, for instance, a bizarre story of rivalries among a weird family at the turn of the century: there were moments when this looked like a zany mating of the Forsyte Saga and the Goom Show, but moments only. Zoltan Huszarik's **Sindbad**, elegantly staged and played though it was, I found tepid and repetitive, despite the camera's almost Robbe-Grillet-like preoccupation with objects. A final disappointment was Kjell Grede's **Klara Lust**, which recapitulates the themes of **Harry Munter** (innocence, a childlike *joie de vivre*) and introduces an almost Buñuelian assembly of amiable social misfits. It's clearly a very personal and deeply felt film, but after an engaging beginning seemed diffuse and unfocused.

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Family grouping in Fassbinder's *'The Merchant of Four Seasons'*



IN THE PICTURE



Historical Hindsight

With a monstrous Big Bertha guarding its doors, and evocative Laura Knight wartime paintings ('Ruby Loftus screwing a breech ring') decking its walls, the Imperial War Museum was an appropriate setting for a recent conference on the use of film in the study and teaching of twentieth century history. Academics and archivists from several countries assembled to debate the questions raised by the increasing use of film in schools and universities. But at the end of the conference, organised jointly by the Open University, the British Universities Film Council and the Imperial War Museum, the only positive conclusion seemed to be that there were no positive conclusions.

If that sounds critical of the historians, archivists and film students at the conference (and with so many professional historians gathered together there was an inevitable tendency to score debating points rather than assemble arguments), at least it illuminates the problem: there are at present—and after several years work in this field—precious few guidelines for the use of film in teaching, and learning, history. The hazards are apparent, and were lengthily discussed at the conference; but as yet no one, historian or film student, seems willing to commit himself to principles. The result, and the disadvantages are obvious, is that one film-making or film-using group is playing the game to rules which another group would partially or even wholly reject.

To a large extent, and this truth at least emerged at the conference, your rules are determined by your audience. There was much academic hair-splitting about the propriety of certain types of film as teaching material, as though it were possible to

formulate a set of textbook qualifications by which a film passed as academically respectable or not. A film like *The First Casualty*, for instance, made by John Terraine and Peter Morley for Thames Television (and shown at peak viewing time), would by these standards clearly not qualify as educationally valid. For one thing it had a theme and a commitment to a particular point of view—the persistence of home front propaganda attitudes of the First War as a factor in determining the climate for the Second. But of course John Terraine was the first to admit his intentional non-objectivity; a television audience of millions requires an entirely different set of criteria from those offered to fifty students in a lecture hall—which implies no criticism of an excellent film of its kind.

In contrast, a film on the strategic bombing of Germany, made as part of an Open University course, seemed academically impeccable: a carefully researched commentary by Dr. Noble Frankland of the War Museum, programme notes backing up the film and drawing attention to the vagaries and falsifications of the newsreel material used. Yet even this film was attacked on academic grounds; and more significantly because it failed to mention the moral questions raised by indiscriminate area bombardment (which it never set out to do).

The subject is a minefield of controversy. But what was for much of the time conspicuously lacking at this conference was an agreed set of basic principles for evaluating film in the teaching of history. This is perhaps not surprising. As someone perceptively pointed out, many of the kinds of questions asked could equally belong to a debate on the theory of history itself, and no two historians are likely to agree precisely on that. Nevertheless,

lines of definition must be drawn if historians and archivists are not to go on arguing at cross-purposes about particular thorny issues.

Some attempt was made in this direction by Professor Grenville of Birmingham University, who outlined four basic ways of evaluating film material: film as an intrinsic part of an academic argument (the Open University films would presumably fit this category); film as a stimulant in teaching; film as a document, with no interpretative intrusion; and film considered as entertainment or for its dramatic value. These definitions (which of course overlap) might have been used as the basis for a continuing debate. At the conference, unfortunately, they were not taken very much further.

But they are obviously of paramount importance, as every historian would admit. The whole question of the use of film, and not only as material for teaching history, is still wide open. And it is surely a more important question than quasi-philosophical wrangling about the 'objectivity' of a film 'fact'. Let's admit that every audience will take its own interpretation from film and leave it at that. (To quote an extreme example from one of the conference films: we now laugh at the image of the child-impaling Hun which was supposed to strike terror and anger in audiences in 1915). A more important first principle is to

recognise, and make recognisable, the dangers of film material, its potential for misuse as well as its value. Film, in McLuhan terminology, is a 'hot' medium; historians, if they are to use it, bear the responsibility of cooling it.

And not only historians. Recently, it has seemed that hardly a week goes by without some compilation of newsreel film on television: twentieth century history interpreted for a new audio-visual generation, for whom Hitler and Pearl Harbour are but names from the past. The danger here, as historians were quick to point out during the BBC's *Great War* series of eight years ago (A. J. P. Taylor calling it 'a monstrous use . . . of historical material in order to create effects'), is the temptation to distort, to use film for its visual potential within the framework of an hour's television. The same piece of film can be used in very different ways to suit producers' fancies—and who but an archivist or a film historian is going to notice the difference between an out of context shot and genuine on-the-spot material?

To a layman, Michael Howard's eight-part *Grand Strategy* series, for instance, shown on BBC-1 at peak time, has seemed irreproachably academic in its presentation, with a distinguished commentary by this distinguished military historian and Fellow of All Souls, instant maps to illustrate the

Fred Zinnemann on the set of 'The Day of the Jackal', his first picture since 'A Man for All Seasons'





Jean-Marie Straub (far right) shooting 'A History Lesson'. Photograph by Sebastian Schadhauer

geographical and military background, and a studio desk festooned with hefty tomes to which Howard can refer. For television history, the presentation standards have been high. But exactly what kinds of standards will allow, to quote just one example, the inclusion of Hitler's voice speaking about the German delay before Stalingrad superimposed over footage of what looked like a quite different speech? And if this dubious use of source material is permitted in a programme of this relative quality, what happens when a less scrupulous producer sees an opportunity to use film for visual effect completely out of context?

Does it matter? The answer is surely that it does matter, when the walls of the London Underground are plastered with posters for a magazine part-work on the last war ('Oh what a war you missed'); when there is an increasing tendency in commercial and semi-commercial organisations to exploit the mass of visual material on twentieth century history for somewhat less than academic purposes; and when, whether historians like it or not, the day is not all that distant when film will supersede, if not entirely replace, the written word as the basic teaching material for a post-literate generation. If footage from the battle of Kursk can be seen twice in a month on television in different contexts and with no distinction made between genuine material and faked reconstruction, then somebody ought to be drawing up rules for the use of archive material; if only because once you admit a breach of the kind of gentleman's agreement which governs the use of such material at present, there is no horizon for its potential misuse.

In fact, a set of working principles (involving accurate dating of film, cross-referencing of material and so on) has already been

formulated, by Lisa Pontecorvo in an article in *University Vision* in February 1968. These are the principles which a conference on the use of archive film might profitably have considered in detail. For the moment at least the usefulness of the conference was that more people will now be asking the right questions. It was only as recently as 1964, after all, that an American academic described film as 'a diabolical last resort for the teacher too lazy to prepare for class. . .'

The problems (not least that of the sheer cost of film for grant-aided bodies like schools and universities) are daunting, but they must, and they will, eventually be overcome. As Sir Arthur Elton said at a previous conference on film and the historian: 'Historians must learn to handle pictures in the way they now handle a pen.'

DAVID WILSON

Bangladesh

Only now, long after the surrender, is the full picture of the victimisation and losses suffered by the Bangladesh film industry coming into focus.

It is a long story. Bengalis are veteran and gifted film-makers, whether in India or what is now Bangladesh. But while Bangladesh remained East Pakistan, it was the object of persistent discrimination. East Pakistan had only one studio, in Dacca, against nine in West Pakistan, which also got priority in the matter of raw stock, equipment and the location of film equipment firms. West Pakistanis got larger quotas of everything, sole agencies for equipment, and with only small sub-offices for raw stock and other necessities in Dacca, East Pakistan was dependent on Karachi and Lahore for its sustenance. The Govern-

ment Films Division, with its head office of course in Karachi, employed only a small percentage of Bengalis.

All the same, Bengalis soon started making films in Urdu, the West Pakistani language, and beating their West Pakistani counterparts at their own game. This did not help them to any professional advancement, so the Bengalis later switched back to making films in Bengali, avant-garde and at times subtly critical of the military regime. When an annual State award for films was instituted one year and votes taken by secret ballot, it was won by a Bengali film, *Asiya*. The awards were thereafter discontinued.

A veteran director, Fazlul Haq, made a film called *President* on the then favoured theme of national integration, which had as hero a small boy who travelled all over Pakistan to rescue his kidnapped sister in a cops and robbers adventure. After he had rescued her, the film ended with the boy being asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, and answering 'President of Pakistan'. The censors did not pass it because not even in a film could an East Pakistani aspire to the Presidency. Haq fought the case up to the High Court, but lost. In disgust, he sold the film to a distributor who cut the offending line and changed the title to *Son of Pakistan*.

Although Dacca's solitary studio remained undamaged throughout the troubles, and most actors saved their lives by fleeing to Calcutta, one of the most brilliant young directors, Zahir Raihan, must be assumed to have paid for his principles with his life. Raihan had managed to put together a documentary based on actuality footage about the atrocities after he left Dacca. It was widely shown and won great sympathy for the

Bangladesh cause. When Raihan returned in December, after the Pakistani surrender, it was to find that his brother Shaheedullah Kaiser, a journalist and one of East Bengal's leading novelists, had been executed with other intellectuals on December 14, barely two days before Dacca became free. Since the bodies were mutilated beyond recognition, Raihan fell into the trap when he got an anonymous telephone call in late January 1972, telling him that his brother was alive in the Bihari camp at Mirpur.

Raihan had organised a committee to muster world opinion against the massacres, and he took the precaution of taking armed guards with him, in his own car, when he entered the Bihari area to look for his brother. Next morning, the car was found smashed to bits and the guards lay dead beside it. Raihan was not seen again. His wife Suchanda, one of the leading actresses of Bangladesh, has returned to acting. But she is still waiting for Raihan; the second wife in the family to lose a husband, and Bangladesh one of its most gifted young directors and intellectuals.

AMITA MALIK

Straub in 1972

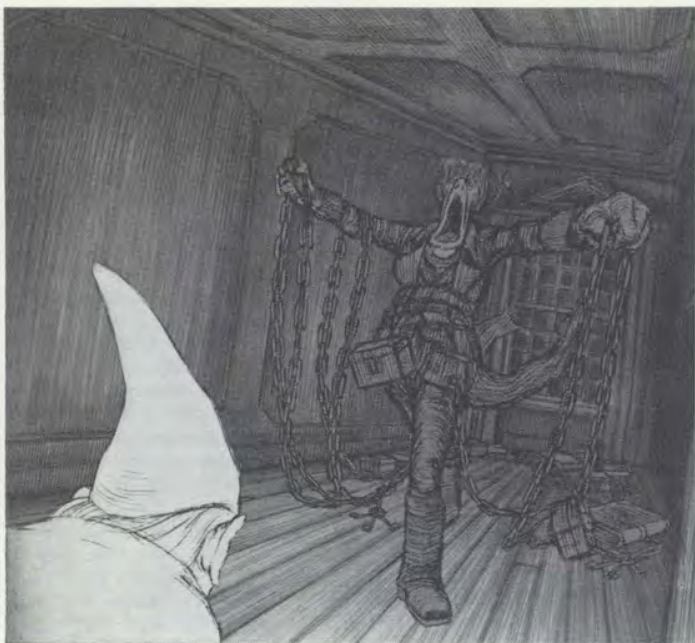
Although his big Schoenberg *Moses and Aaron* project is still in the works for 1973, Jean-Marie Straub was making two films this summer, an hour-long feature and a short. The feature, *A History Lesson*, was shot all over Italy—a day in the Upper Adige, a few days at Frascati, a day in Elba. Once again, it will be a German language film, like Straub's early works; like *Othon*, it is set more or less in ancient Rome. But even more than with *Othon*, its references are sharply contemporary.

At the same time, Straub and Danièle Huillet have made a short using as point of departure a fascinating little-known work of Schoenberg, *Music for a Silent Film*. It seems that some enterprising music publisher in the early 1920s asked a number of composers to provide some 'sample' music for a non-existent silent film; to what end it is difficult to imagine. Not surprisingly, Schoenberg chose to illustrate 'Threatening Danger, Anguish, Catastrophe', and the Straubs have set this off against some extraordinarily prophetic letters from Schoenberg to Kandinsky about the rise of Nazism. Both films should be completed by the time that this appears.

RICHARD ROUD

Zagreb Animation

It was entirely appropriate, after years of producing Europe's sharpest cartoons, that Zagreb should join Annecy and Mamaia as one of the world's three major competitive animation festivals. So, for one scorching week in June, Popeye the Sailor, Tom and Jerry, Woody Woodpecker, Bugs Bunny



Richard Williams' 'A Christmas Carol'. The appearance of Marley's Ghost

and Mister Magoo forgot their differences and descended on Yugoslavia. Not only the films were there, but also the creators—Walter Lantz, Chuck Jones, Stephen Bosustow and Friz Freleng—ready to dash off a signed sketch or reminisce about the great days of animation, when budgets were larger and production schedules less cramped.

Apart from the retrospectives, some 88 titles were involved in competition. For once, to judge from the moderate standard of the Information Section, a pre-selection panel had done its work well; and if there was any grumbling about the eventual prizes, it stemmed from a feeling that the international jury had perhaps favoured the classical over the experimental. It's probably invidious anyway to view scores of cartoons one after another; the effect can be too like consuming a dozen *hors-d'oeuvres*. Certain styles suffer, and inevitably the subtle is displaced in the evening's memory by the bombastic, the chuckle by the guffaw (though that's not to disparage Bob Godfrey's excellent *Kama Sutra Rides Again*, mysteriously omitted from the prize-winners).

Cartoon is a term that upsets many animators. While not forgetting that the worldwide success of Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny and the rest has allowed them freedom to work in the medium, these artists prefer to think of animation as a means of expressing complex ideas in concise forms. So many of the best entries at Zagreb were sombre rather than funny.

The Grand Prix went to *The Battle at Kerzence*, a grandiose re-creation of medieval courtly drama and struggle, made by the veteran Soviet animator Ivanov Vano in collaboration with J. Norstein. Like a row of icons or brass rubbings come to life, the wide screen comprises a crescendo of movement, while the film's pace is perfectly judged, shifting into

higher and higher gear with the epic music. For sheer classical strength, *The Battle at Kerzence* loomed over its festival rivals.

More spontaneous brilliance was to be found in such lesser award winners as *Joshua and the Blob*, in which John C. Lange's sour and rubbery character is afflicted with a purple blob that nearly smothers him and at last develops into a partner; and *Modern Sports Coaching*, from Hungary. Scripted by Jozsef Nepp (who made *Five Minute Murder* a few years ago) and directed by Béla Ternovszky, this hilarious satire shows how a ruthless coach extracts the best from his performers, turning the long-jump board into a bed of nails, playing chess with time bombs, tennis with a grenade.

Richard Williams deservedly carried off a category prize for *A Christmas Carol*, made for ABC TV in the States and due to be screened by the BBC this winter. Williams and his team have marvellously captured the wizened quality of nineteenth-century book illustrations, and, in Scrooge's meetings with the various spirits, they seem to have solved one technical problem after another with animation of such skill and richness that it seems a shame to present it merely on the TV screen.

Raoul Servais' *Operation X-70* won the top award in its group, but its glib philosophy and pretentious dialogue undermined some striking visuals and an interesting storyboard. Another disappointment was *Pictures at an Exhibition*, an attempt by Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker to accompany the music of Mussorgsky on their pin-screen (an ingenious method that really needs a suspenseful subject, like the prologue to Welles' *The Trial*, or *Le Nez*).

Modestly and diplomatically, Zagreb Film showed its own productions out of competition. But some of the studio's 1972 films would undoubtedly have won

prizes anywhere else, notably *Tup-Tup*, Nedeljko Dragic's quick-fire sequence of gags, and Zlatko Bourek's *The Cat*, with its sophisticated graphics.

The week in Zagreb emphasised that, as with feature film-making, the old divisions between art and industry are gradually being bridged. And the Festival confirmed the contemporary range of animation, from Australian satire to American educational cartoons, from erotic commercials for bath soap to Yoji Kuri's sustained, surrealistic battle of the sexes.

PETER COWIE

The Other Channel

On October 14, BBC-2 will be launching a new 2-2½ hour weekly arts programme, edited by Bill Morton. Its working title (like most information emanating from the BBC, it's strictly provisional) is *The Other Channel* and, unlike existing arts magazine programmes, its emphasis will be on live performances, with a large element of (studio) audience participation.

The programme will, however, contain some filmed material, and one of its more exciting features promises to be the presentation of a classic short story. This part of the programme is being co-produced by Gavin Millar and Melvyn Bragg, who have invited a number of well-known writers outside the BBC to do the adaptations, and some equally well-known people (not all of them film-makers) to direct them. 'We thought it would be interesting to ask people who were in the habit of slogging away for three or four years making a feature film, taking ages to set

it up, if they wanted to do something at much shorter length, 20 to 30 minutes, from very good material and with very few restrictions on them apart from the budget.' (The total of this particular restriction is in the area of £10,000 per story.)

The first series of stories will be Joyce's *Dubliners*, 'done in the locations mentioned by Joyce except where they've just demolished one of them in their relentless efforts to improve the face of Dublin by pulling down Georgian buildings.' Gavin Millar adapted and directed the first of these (*Two Gallants*) himself, 'just to see how impossible it was.' And adaptations of four other *Dubliners* stories—*The Sisters*, by John McGahern; *Counterparts*, by David Mercer; *Clay*, by Simon Raven; *Grace*, by David Storey—are now under way. David Jones (of the RSC), Joseph Losey, Jonathan Miller, and Peter Gill (of the Royal Court) have agreed respectively to direct these, though at the time of writing the agreements have not been formalised.

After Joyce, *The Other Channel* plans to move on to Chekhov. Jeremy Brooks is adapting *Transgression* and *An Artist's Story*; and Ken Loach has agreed to adapt and direct *Agafya*. It's also expected that Ken Russell will adapt/direct an Isaac Babel story, *The Life and Adventures of Matvey Pavlitchenko*; and several other directors—including Karel Reisz, John Schlesinger and Stephen Frears—have been approached.

Despite the restrictions, the producers hope the programme will 'mark an important step towards making good short films as distinct from very good short TV plays on film.' With so little

John Cromwell (centre, in spectacles) directs George Bancroft in 'Rich Man's Folly' (1931)



money to be made, they know they'll be working only with people who care about the material, and believe they can offer them 'a chance to make the sort of film they just wouldn't get to make anywhere else.' If the series is a success, they hope to be able to extend their invitations, both to foreign directors and to virtually unknown young British filmmakers—thus combining a modest version of the work of the RAI with a more diffused version of the work of the BFI Production Board.

JAN DAWSON

The Munich Ten

The tradition of progressively more spectacular Olympic films this year achieves a kind of zenith, with the organisation of David Wolper's U.S./West German co-production almost rivalling that of the Games themselves. Ten international directors were invited to film aspects of the Games that interested them, an arrangement which leaves many events unrecorded (although Marcel Marceau will also be miming his own version of some more of them). But with every race and result already scrutinised so intensively by the TV cameras, it was felt that the 1972 official film should be more of an impression of the meeting, with the accent on 'human interest'.

The directors are: Milos Forman, covering the high jump and the decathlon; Kon Ichikawa, who directed the 1964 film and is this year filming the men's 100 metres with thirty-five cameras; Claude Lelouch, the losers; Yuri Ozerov, athletes on the starting line; Arthur Penn, the pole vault, and not the study of Bobby Lee Hunter he had originally planned; Michael Pfleger, the women of the Games; John Schlesinger, the marathon; Ousmane Sembene, basketball; and Mai Zetterling (who in a TV interview from Munich declared that her interest was in the obsessive rather than the sporting side), weightlifting. Franco Zeffirelli, who was to have filmed the journey of the Olympic Torch on its way through the Balkans to Munich, dropped out en route, saying that the Games had 'become a platform for political protest'. Unlike previous Olympic films, which have tended to be delayed by editing problems, Wolper's should be completed by early 1973. If its segments survive all the hazards, he will have achieved a considerable coup.

DAVID MCGILLIVRAY

John Cromwell

John Cromwell, director of forty-four American films between 1929 and 1963, is nearly a year older than Chaplin. He is tall, elegant, lucid, and at 84 a man at peace with memories of his career as a 'studio director' who never had a small measure of the total creative control of a Chaplin. Cromwell, for the most part, settled for quality and taste.



Jack Lemmon and Juliet Mills in Billy Wilder's 'Avanti!'

His film career began with sound. 'When Paramount hired me as a director, in 1928, I had already acted in, produced or directed two hundred plays, having made my Broadway debut in 1906. The studio bosses were frantic about this new fad, sound pictures, and the stage director was looked upon as the saviour of the industry, someone who could handle dialogue. My first two projects were Nancy Carroll musicals, co-directed with Eddie Sutherland, a fine comedy director.

'I made five pictures during my second year at Paramount. One of them, a courtroom drama with William Powell, was shot in thirteen days, plus four days for rehearsals which I insisted on. And that was an 'A' picture. I complained to B. P. Schulberg, the studio boss, and he said, "But what can I do? I have to turn out fifty-two of these a year..."

David Selznick, who had been Schulberg's assistant, brought Cromwell to RKO and his first memorable film, the 1934 version of *Of Human Bondage*, with Leslie Howard and Bette Davis. 'I recall most the troubles of a film which needed six previews to cut out laughter from an audience which would not accept this milk-sop of a hero being run over by a crude little bitch. We lost so much footage; but the film holds up even today, with the power of those performances.'

Selznick was the major influence on Cromwell's career. 'David and I were extremely sympathetic about ideas. He was the sort of man who would dictate pages of script all night long, hand them to me at the studio gate in the morning, then go home to sleep, confident that I could direct those scenes as he wanted them. We were at odds only because of his

love of lush sentimentality. I would always underplay that—I would never let an actor sneak a quiver into his voice.' Cromwell credits the 'great story sense' of Selznick and the cinematography of Wong Howe, Lee Garmes and Leon Shamroy for their contributions to the opulent *Prisoner of Zenda* with Ronald Colman, *Made for Each Other* with James Stewart and Carole Lombard, *Since You Went Away* and *The Enchanted Cottage*.

Some of his best work of the period was non-Selznick inspired, like *Algiers*, with Boyer loving Hedy Lamarr in the Casbah. 'I had seen and loved *Pépé le Moko* and I thought "I've never been to the Casbah, wouldn't know what the hell it would look like." I didn't wish to be presumptuous, so I reproduced Duvivier's film almost shot for shot and really captured the flavour of it.' *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* offered an opening-up of the play and Wong Howe's photography as well as Raymond Massey's intelligent portrait of Lincoln. 'Frank Capra was to have done it with Gary Cooper, but that fell through, thank God. It is one of my proudest efforts.'

Cromwell worked steadily through the Forties, with films like *Anna and the King of Siam* with Rex Harrison and Irene Dunne. 'Darryl Zanuck produced this at 20th, and he kept sending his court jester, Georgie Jessel, into my office to drop hints: "DFZ was wondering if you couldn't punch up the love scenes, inject a little more comedy..." Well, I love this picture because of the unconventional love story, because we did not dilute the quality.'

Cromwell's downfall began when Howard Hughes assumed

control of RKO in 1951. 'I had my best Hollywood contract ever at RKO—7,500 dollars a week for directing one picture a year for five years. Hughes was a renowned right-wing witch-hunter and he sought to provoke me into resigning by ordering me to direct a script called *I Married a Communist*. This was the worst script I had ever seen—numerous rewrites failed to improve it. Now, I was a liberal and Adolphe Menjou, with his damned Alliance for Americanism Committee, had crucified me. Menjou testified before the HUAC that if Cromwell wasn't a Communist he sure as hell acted like one. My agent showed me a copy of the blacklist and my name wasn't on it, but the air froze around me at the studio. Hughes terminated my contract at last and I left Hollywood to act in a play on Broadway. I never worked in Hollywood again.'

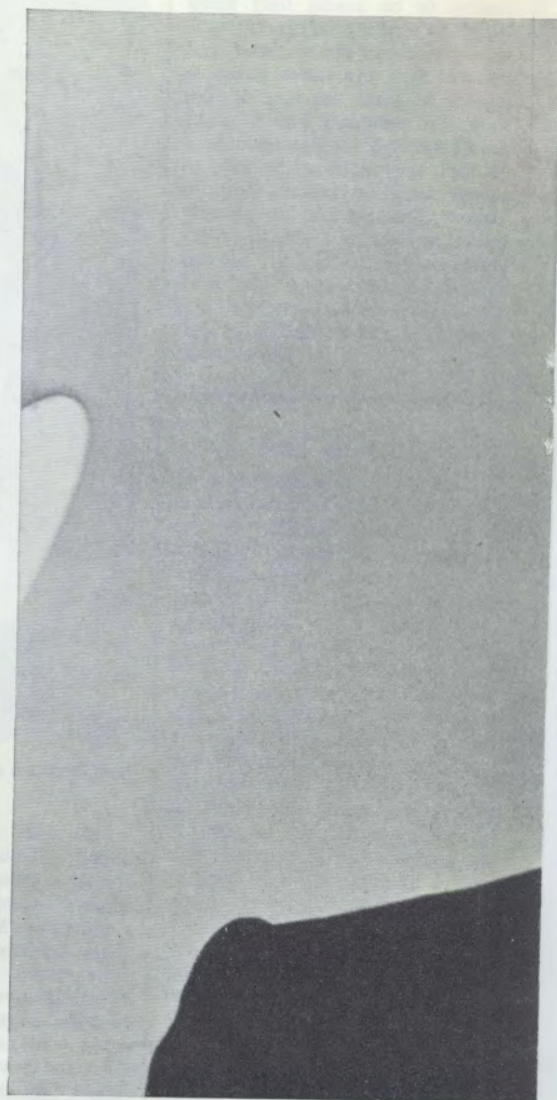
Broadway offered a second career as a character actor, and in 1958 Cromwell was given the chance to direct Paddy Chayevsky's screenplay *The Goddess*, with Kim Stanley as a movie star in the Monroe mould. In the early 1960s he made two low-budget failures, filmed abroad with impossible scripts. He still works, whenever he wants to, in the theatre. 'I had disciplines ingrained into me from many years working in the theatre. I knew too well what the problems were for the studios producing pictures; I identified these problems from the producer's viewpoint, so my tendency was to *subscribe*. I didn't assert myself nearly as much as I should have. The men who achieved more than I did simply found ways to say "No". Yielding so much hurt me some. After all, once you begin shooting, the picture is *you*.'

ROBERT FREY



Eric Rohmer's

L'amour, l'après-midi





'L'Amour, l'Après-Midi', the sixth of Eric Rohmer's 'contes moraux'. With Bernard Verley (left and far left) as Frédéric, Zouzou (below left and far left) as his mistress, Chloe. Françoise Fabian (below) in a sequence in which Frédéric encounters the heroines of previous 'contes moraux'.



FRENCH CONNECTIONS

Philip French

some
random
reflections of a
cinophile
revisiting
America



Taking my whole family to America, I naturally went on a charter flight. This involves certain dangers (that the airline might go suddenly bankrupt or officials turn up to question one's dubious credentials) and deprivations. As far as my children were concerned, the worst of the latter was the absence of an in-flight movie. How soon does a bizarre luxury come to seem an accepted necessity? One wonders if back in 1903 when Thomas Edison met the Wright Brothers he stared into the wild blue yonder saying, 'Orville, I have a vision that one day two hundred people will cross the Atlantic in your machine being entertained by pictures from my Kinetoscope.'

I must say I don't much care for the captive audience aspect of in-flight films, though of course on Jumbo jets there's a choice. A friend of mine travelling between New York and London recently was offered *The French Connection* or *The Go-Between*: presumably designed to cushion culture-shock in some way, depending on your nationality and direction of flight. The ideal in-flight movie, and I speak as the only person on a TWA New York-San Francisco trip who remained awake to see it, is something like *The Sandpiper*—a film wholly divorced from earthbound reality, full of helicopter shots that place the viewer in a dreamy feet-off-the-ground relationship to the narrative, and in which the dissociation of sight from sound (the one muzzily on the screen up front, the other coming through a thin plastic earphone recently extracted from a sanitised polythene bag) perfectly captures the synthetic nature and divided intentions of the product. Inevitably one thinks of a quite different type of programming—the films that might have been shown by Guy Grand had Terry Southern's *Magic Christian* been an airliner and not a cruise-ship: *Skyjacked*, *No Highway*, *The High and the Mighty*, *The Night My Number Came Up*, *Airport*, etc., with the passengers forced to keep watching by *Clockwork Orange* clamps.

A celebrated 1946 Giles cartoon depicts a distressed G.I. Bride clutching a couple of howling children in the wilderness of backwoods Appalachia. A bus is heading off into the distance; before her is a rickety log cabin with lethargic hillbillies stretched out in its shade. 'But honey,' says her still uniformed husband, 'whatever gave you the idea that all Americans live in skyscrapers?' The answer naturally is Hollywood, yet you don't have to be a sour sociology student or a humourless cinéaste to insist that she was the victim of a very selective reading of American films. I don't know who was the first person to say 'America isn't like the movies'—he doesn't get into any of the usual quotation books. But the remark had been repeated to me so often in my youth that when I first visited America nearly twenty years ago the first article I wrote—at the invitation of a university newspaper—was called 'America is like the movies'.

Whatever its manifest sins of commission and omission, Hollywood has captured both the surface of the American scene at various stages of its development, and the feel, the immediate experience of that life. One might go further and argue that no other national cinema can match the American achievement. The significant artistically mediated images of place in Europe remain those of painters and writers—Bergman's Scandi-

avia is a pale thing beside that of Ibsen and Strindberg, a few North Country films of the early 1960s failed to replace Lowry's industrial landscape, the French cinema has scarcely challenged the pre-eminence of the Impressionists. America on the other hand is a many-layered palimpsest of movie memories. To be in New York is almost to be oppressed by such recollections—the déjà-vu from Brooklyn Bridge. Is it just the overwhelming bulk of American movies of the past sixty years? Or something more—perhaps the peculiar physical presence of the American urban and rural scene? Both factors I feel play their part. Americans remain astonished in the face of the land they have inherited and the cities they have created.

Saying that the visitor to America is oppressed by memories of movies implies an experience similar to Borges' 'Funes the Memorious', who was at the terrible mercy of his powers of total recall. And this is true. There is also something rather charming about it. Still, nothing could involve more indulgent fun for the writer or more tedium for the reader than an itinerary made up solely of movie associations from New York to Texas via Washington and New Orleans. I will merely say that anyone would be ill-advised to travel by bus in the hope of recapturing the community spirit of Capra's *It Happened One Night* or coming across a fugitive heiress—to misquote Holmes, they'd just find a case of a Greyhound that didn't spark in the night.

The city of Waco, Texas, was known after the Civil War as 'Six-shooter Junction' for its rip-roaring position on the Chisholm Trail. There's a Texas Ranger Museum there, but what the town is now most celebrated for, at least in academic circles, is the world's largest collection of books and manuscripts by Robert and Elizabeth Browning at Baylor University. When I discovered that one of the reasons I'd been invited to teach for a semester at the University of Texas was that someone in Austin had liked an article I'd written on Western movies, I thought of Waco and it seemed less like taking coals to Newcastle. Not that I spent much time lecturing on cowboy pictures. The only really Western student in my class was a boy with knee-length boots and a stetson which he wore tipped on to the back of his head during a seminar. He asked if instead of a term paper he could make a film. In my rather old-fashioned way I insisted that he really ought to try to write something. Two weeks later he dropped out of school to 'find himself' by taking two years off and riding his horse down through Mexico and into South America. He's presumably halfway to Tierra del Fuego by now.

On the whole I thought the students very lively if a little too single-mindedly devoted

Left: girl with gun: Ali MacGraw in 'The Getaway'. Girl in gunsight in Bogdanovich's 'Targets'

to the cinema. I found myself having to persuade them that there were other things—such as books, the theatre, painting, music. The reluctance of some of them to take an interest in other matters resulted in some strange misunderstandings. One for example, though writing a paper on films with recent historical settings, professed himself totally uninterested in history or politics. When he came to talk about *The Go-Between* and its background he was at a loss to date it within ten years or so. The reference to Boers somewhat confused him, and suddenly it dawned on me that he thought Lord Trimingham had been hunting boars. I once discovered while talking to a student about John Ford, author of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, that he thought I was commenting on John Ford, director of *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. On the other hand a very bright pupil sought my opinion of John Wain and I gave him my glib rundown on the iconic significance of John Wayne.

Film shows on American campuses offer an embarrassment of riches, often half a dozen special screenings a night, mostly in connection with some academic programme or other, but some to raise money for various undergraduate activities. (A season of horror pictures I attended was laid on to raise funds for a student-sponsored abortion law reform campaign.) Movie directors were regularly flown down to Austin to talk about their films. With one such visitor, Fritz Lang, I had the opportunity to have lunch and found him as charming and articulate as I had expected him to be. I found it sad to hear him talk about Peter Lorre and how he'd become so type-cast as a result of *M* that Lang had never felt able to work with him again. And interesting to find that for all his friendship with and admiration of Brecht, he didn't find any of his plays remotely entertaining—he only liked *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*. We also discussed Hitchcock, whose *Thirty-Nine Steps* had just been shown on the public service television channel a week after the revival there of *M*. I put to him my feeling that Hitchcock's films of the 1930s seemed very Langian. His view of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* was astonishing, but it would be indiscreet of me to repeat it out of the context of our rambling conversation.

Like most western states, Texas is going to a great deal of trouble to attract outside movie-makers—a big source of pollution-free money of which New Mexico is currently the largest earner. However, the recently created Texas Film Commission, set up by Governor Preston Smith, himself a one-time cinema owner, has been charged with more than this. They've been given the task of promoting a local movie industry, the basis for which is already there in the numerous producers of non-theatrical movies (TV commercials, documentaries, etc.) and the university film departments. Already Martin Jurow, producer of several Blake Edwards films, has established himself in Dallas to work on a programme of medium budget pictures. An article in the January 1972 *Texas Business Review* revealed that efforts to establish a native industry were made as early as 1913 in San Antonio (an abortive project to make a series of one-reelers based on the Alamo incident) and in Austin (a three-reeler called, appropriately



Texas as location: meeting between Lee and Ulysses S. Grant in 'The Warrens of Virginia' (1923)



Texas 1971: Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges and Sam Bottoms in 'The Last Picture Show'

enough for the company's only completed picture, *Their Lives on a Slender Thread*, which Warner distributed).

Hollywood's first venture into Texas, the Fox Company's *Warrens of Virginia* in 1923, led to the death of the star Martha Mansfield. In the words of the *Texas Business Review*'s James R. Buchanan: 'In one of her scenes towards the end of location shooting Miss Mansfield's costume of light and billowing material was ignited by a carelessly thrown match. She died the next day in a San Antonio hospital. The film was completed, and later premiered in San Antonio.'

Among the first fruits of the Texas Film Commission's activities to bring Hollywood to the state and assure maximum local cooperation has been Sam Peckinpah's *The Getaway*, which had a lengthy shooting schedule in El Paso, Huntsville (home of the state penitentiary) and San Marcos, a town hitherto best known as the site of Lyndon Johnson's *alma mater*. For several weeks the company took over San Marcos, roping off the main street and, apparently without too much prior consultation, transforming several shops overnight for the film's own purposes. One proprietor, denied access to his premises, murmured a few words of mild complaint, but added, 'Now don't get the idea that I'm anti-movie.'

Whether Peckinpah's picture will gladden the hearts of Texans is an open question. The *Bonnie and Clyde*-style plot turns upon a young crook (Steve McQueen) being sprung from gaol by a bent guard (Ben Johnson) and taking off with his girl (Ali MacGraw) to rob a bank and cut a bloody swathe across the state. Texans quite rightly have their own view of home, and outsiders from the state borders to the other side of the world have another. This uniform image of the place, perhaps more fixed than for any

other state, is a land of loud-speaking oilmen and comic cowboys, civic boosters in stetsons and irresponsible right-wing millionaires, of endless stretches of land sparsely occupied by desperate, violent people. General Philip Sheridan is best known for the assertion that the only good Indian is a dead Indian. Down in Texas—where they actually managed to kill or drive out an enormous Indian population, leaving a mere couple of hundred on the state's only reservation—Sheridan is remembered for another statement. 'If I owned hell and Texas,' he said back in the 1860s when vainly attempting to restore order in the lawless Lone Star State, 'I'd rent out Texas and live in hell.' This is of course a grossly distorted view and one no doubt that the Texas Film Commission is determined to correct. But in one way or another it's the image purveyed by a whole tradition of movies—such as *Giant*, *The Chase*, *Brewster McCloud* and, most recently, Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show*.

Local reactions to the Bogdanovich film were equivocal. Numerous people told me that of course Texas wasn't really like that, and then went on to say in the next breath that they'd grown up in a town precisely like the movie's Anarene. In Archer City, where the picture was shot, everybody disapproved of it despite the fact that apparently few seemed to have made the twenty-five mile trip to Wichita Falls to see the movie. Not only had the 'picture show' closed in Archer City but it had been burnt down some years ago. (The company shot the interiors at a cinema in a nearby town.) The father of Larry McMurtry, author of the original novel, told a journalist that he thought his son had talent but had advised him that he wouldn't write a bestseller until he put a little less sex in his books.

There are a couple of minor points about Bogdanovich's film that haven't, I think, been noted. The first is that while he collaborated with McMurtry on the screenplay and generally followed the book with some fidelity (what has been cut out is mostly a little old-time religion and a lot of new-style sex including some buggery of the local cattle), the director has imposed his own view of the cinema. Where McMurtry saw Hollywood as the provider of false dreams and images of behaviour, Bogdanovich is celebrating a golden age of the movies at the point where it was about to give way to television. When Sonny and his girl meet at the picture show in the novel they see a ghastly old Warner Brothers melodrama called *Storm Warning* (featuring Doris Day and California's own Ronald Reagan); Bogdanovich chooses to have them see Minnelli's *Father of the Bride* and plasters the cinema with posters suggesting that Sam the Lion's programme advisers were the editorial board of *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

A switch has been made on the last night's film as well, to show *Red River*—a moving and ironic comment on what the Red River valley has now become. Not only isn't *Red River* shown in the novel, a point is made of the fact that it isn't. 'It would have taken Winchester 73 or *Red River* or some other big movie to have crowded out the memories the boys were having,' wrote McMurtry. What they actually saw was Audie Murphy in *The Kid from Texas* (directed by Kurt



'The Alamo'

Neumann, not a major figure, one fancies, in the Bogdanovich pantheon), which was so bad that the boys quit the cinema and spent the rest of the night in a brothel in Fort Worth.

A second and rather odd detail is that the name of the town in which the film is set has been changed from Thalia to Anarene. I stumbled across what I suppose is the reason for this change in an interview with Bogdanovich conducted a few years ago for a book called *The Director's Event*, in which he says of his early movie-going career: 'Then as I grew older, I was influenced by critics, as we all are, and my taste went bad. I used to sit in the Thalia (a New York art-house) and look at all those boring foreign films.'

A third point is that *The Last Picture Show* isn't Bogdanovich's first contact with Texas. His first feature, *Targets*, was inspired by an appalling incident in Austin in the summer of 1966 when a student called Charles Whitman murdered his wife and mother before locking himself into the top of the University library tower and shooting forty-four people, fourteen of them fatally. I was living not far from Whitman's former home, a knowledge that coloured my whole feeling about the neighbourhood. Had the film been made there no doubt it would have been regarded as something typically Texan. Texans who resent *The Last Picture Show* should be grateful to Bogdanovich for transposing the Whitman story to Los Angeles and letting audiences, if they wished, think that the film was peculiarly revealing of life in California or America at large.

The Last Picture Show has turned Archer City into a minor temporary tourist attraction and makes the traveller very conscious of the grubby little storefront movie houses in small Texas towns. (The lexicographical traveller also ponders on the origins of the term 'picture show' to describe a cinema and wonders whether he is right to consider it an example of synecdoche.) Actually Autumn

1952 was a little premature for the demise of Anarene's movie house—the real challenge of TV didn't come until the mid or late-Fifties in the South-West, and for TV coverage rural areas are still subject to the vagaries of commerce, cables and terrain.

A good many towns the size of Archer City still manage to keep their cinemas open on a part-time basis. Others have turned them to different uses. I passed through an odd little community called Post in north-west Texas which had been created from scratch in 1907 by the legendary cereal tycoon C. W. Post to prove his pet theory that given cheap land and starting off debt-free a party of sturdy settlers could make a go of this barren wilderness. Sadly there followed a period of drought that even America's most spectacular series of rain-making experiments failed to cure. The patron died and in 1917 his daughter intervened to bail out the citizens. In 1957 she erected a statue to her father in the town square, a suitably unheroic chunk of bronze that depicts him sitting cross-legged in a double-breasted suit (quite different from the normal statuary one sees in Texas); but her philanthropy did not run to preserving the picture show. It is now a garishly decorated haven for Jesus freaks, those less economically minded but equally sanguine subscribers to Post's abiding belief in the American dream.

If a vacant cinema is a sad sight (and I nearly shed tears when I saw the 'closed' signs on the Astoria, Finsbury Park and the Tolmer when driving home from the airport on my return to London), abandoned drive-in cinemas are even more desolate and desolating, for there is no other function they can perform. Out in the countryside they stand, the projection booths like decaying World War Two blockhouses, grass growing up alongside the loudspeaker stumps, the empty screens resembling giant Egyptian tablets, their hieroglyphics obliterated by the wind. Should they survive, they'll present a fascinating problem for future archaeologists.

Rapid growth and equally rapid decay: this is the law of American life. The population of Albuquerque, for example, has grown from 96,000 to a quarter of a million in the last twenty years in a state in which, to judge from the 'Ghost Town Map' they give you when entering New Mexico, abandoned settlements outnumber present-day communities about twenty to one. Some ghost towns have totally disappeared, others are colourful collections of rotting mine-shafts, dusty saloons and disintegrated dwellings, a few are tentatively inhabited by the elderly unemployed waiting for death, hippies grasping at a little shelter in a benevolent climate, and souvenir shop owners, most of whom appear to cater for collectors of rocks, old bottles and other Western curios. The symbolic, powerfully resonant character of ghost towns has not been overlooked by the makers of Western movies. And it is significant that both Hitchcock and Losey should have chosen ghost towns as the settings for their ventures into the West—the former in *Saboteur*, the latter in *The Prowler*.

Driving around the West, one is rarely disappointed by the landscape, but almost invariably by the towns, with their richly resounding names and highly unimpressive appearances. They have grown into anonymity or become a thin string of motels, filling stations and short order joints. Del Rio, Abilene, San Angelo, Blanco, Laredo and a hundred others—the settings are fine, but the places are nondescript until you search out the past in some small corner of the town or in the local pioneer museum. One feels the same way in North Africa on seeing a tram-car rattling its way through the centre of Tunis with a sign on the front proclaiming its destination as Carthage. The most 'authentic' bit of old Texas is actually the Alamo Village, built in the late Fifties on James T. 'Happy' Shahan's Angus Ranch at Bracketville near the Mexican border. Shahan had lured several movie-makers to the vicinity to help out local unemployment in the early Fifties before, and under the influence of Arizona's 'Old Tucson', he built the present permanent movie set for John Wayne's *The Alamo*, with the notion that it would serve for other films and become a tourist attraction. Only two features of any consequence have been made there since *The Alamo*—Ford's *Two Rode Together* and McLaglen's *Bandolero!*—and it's mainly used now for bits of TV series, commercials and the perpetuation of the Western myth among tourists. The resident cowboys' guns fire blanks and, more regrettably, the saloon is dry, but the place is uncannily convincing.

Nevertheless, and hardly surprisingly, I much preferred my visits to Billy the Kid's grave in a dusty, neglected little cemetery outside Fort Sumner, New Mexico; to John Ford's Monument Valley (one thinks of it as his rather than the Navajo's, which is wrong, and there's not much more to add to what has already been written on it other than to observe that it is unlike any other part of the reservation and the West generally and that it occupies a relatively small area); and to Tombstone, Arizona.

I can't remember when I didn't want to visit Tombstone; a childish ambition certainly, but not one easily set aside by the knowledge that Wyatt Earp was a crook and

a liar and Doc Holliday a pimp and a murderer—and not even a medical practitioner but a dentist. (Some of what is claimed to be his professional equipment I've now seen.) It is also a commonplace today to see Earp and Holliday as a pair of latent (at least) homosexuals, and a recent book on Ford detects a powerful undercurrent of homosexual attraction in *My Darling Clementine* that eluded earlier critics. If they saw such things in Ford's work, the editors of *Sequence* back in the early 1950s very rightly protected us from them.

Visiting the place at last wasn't, I'm happy to say, a disappointment. Shrunk since its brief period of prosperity and notoriety in the 1880s to a museum town of some thousand inhabitants, Tombstone retains a raffish charm as 'the town too tough to die' and its citizens live on and off those few minutes on October 26th, 1881 when the Earps and Holliday confronted the Clanton gang behind the O.K. Corral and three men bit the dust to be buried alongside each other in Boot Hill. Why this particular fight should have so permanently and potently entered the popular culture is hard to say. Perhaps because the existential circumstances have a certain classic aspect, or because of the quality of the vivid and conflicting first-hand accounts that appeared in the following day's *Tombstone Epitaph* and were given in evidence at the coroner's court and subsequent murder trial.

None of the four major post-war movies has done the event and the town justice. Altogether in Tombstone, as one examines the modestly displayed historical evidence, one is aware of a time when men were standing outside themselves, self-consciously living in history, creating a legend on the frontier of an established society that was turning their actions into instant mythology. They stepped with the same wary tread and spoke in the same guarded rhetoric as the new frontiersmen, the astronauts on the moon. The truest victim of the myth was clearly the Russian aristocrat who booked a stage box nightly at the Bird Cage Theatre (the place that gave us 'a bird in a gilded cage') and eventually to prove his manhood went out and stole a horse. Nobody believed he needed the money, but they hanged him just the same. Going along with his fantasy to the grisly end was obviously the ultimate tribute they could pay him.

I took with me a lifetime of violent fantasies to Tombstone and they found much there to feed on. But what I breathed was bracing mountain air. And what struck me most about the town was the abundance of roses, originally cultivated no doubt by decent law-abiding citizens as a sort of objective correlative of their attitude as pioneers, a gesture against what seemed corrupt and ephemeral in the town. Like the miners and gunslingers, this supporting cast of dedicated gardeners too are gone—they went further West or finished up in the fullness of time in Boot Hill, where more than incidentally one is surprised by the high number of suicides among the more quaintly, often comically marked grave-stones. (The markers unfortunately are a little too well painted and kept up, far less convincing than the graveyard at 'Happy' Shahan's Alamo Village.) But the roses remain, and especially what is widely regarded (and recognised by 'Believe-it-or-

not' Ripley) as the world's largest single rose bush in the garden of the Marcia family, which as prospectors, innkeepers and currently as antique dealers (importing much of their stock from London) has lived in Tombstone since 1880.

If Tombstone's violent reputation lured me there, I was repaid during a visit to the local printing shop. Waiting to have my eldest son's name inscribed upon a 'Wanted' poster signed by Wyatt Earp, I was identified as a British visitor by the busy proprietor. 'Terrible things going on there in Northern Ireland,' he remarked. Standing there in his peaceful little town he was full of disinterested sympathy, and all I could do was nod.

If you're no longer in the limelight you've descended into oblivion. Asking 'Where are they now?' is a favourite American pastime, the socio-historical branch of the nostalgia-trivia business. Americans on seeing Bessie Love working the telephone switchboard in *Sunday*, *Bloody Sunday* are happy to discover that that revered citizen of Midland, Texas is alive and well and living in London. The visitor to Texas finds that Greer Garson is a leading Dallas matron and patron and so is Dorothy Malone, whose expertise is currently at the public disposal as a member of the Texas Film Commission. The lugubrious much missed features of Macdonald Carey I found appearing every afternoon on a TV soap opera called *Days of Our Lives*, and Ann Blyth, Betty Grable and Jane Russell turned up in commercials. Miss Grable wasn't advertising tights, but Miss Russell was inevitably advertising brassières, not designed by Howard Hughes (he was pre-occupied by what in the current jargon are called 'low-profile' pursuits) but rather more orthodox garments from Playtex which she describes rather flatteringly as being 'For girls like us'. Driving through Arizona, the senior citizen is constantly being exhorted by billboards featuring senior citizens of the movie colony in Western gear to settle or buy real estate in some community or other:

'Invest in the old Stewart Granger Ranch' reads one sign; 'Rory Calhoun invites you to Arizona City'; 'Forrest Tucker says "Come be my neighbour" at Diamond Bell Ranch'. I was slightly worried by this, but the time to get really worried will be when one sees a sign reading 'Jane Fonda says "Retire with me in Sunset City"' or 'Steve McQueen invites you to spend the twilight of your life with him at "The Great Escape" Ranch'.

I've spoken about the preconceptions most people have of Texas, but no particular town there is immediately identifiable in the way that the three most numinous, photogenic cities of the far West are. Merely to turn a camera in Las Vegas, San Francisco or Los Angeles is to release certain moral properties into the film-maker's narrative. One is strongly aware of these qualities while visiting them, and they are conditioned by the nature of the light, the architecture, the city's situation, the modes and means of existence, and by a variety of historical and recent cultural traditions.

Cynicism, superficiality, enforced gaiety, a denial of the natural, a lurking corruption of the spirit and the community, a two-dimensionality in vista and character, a fundamental desperation—these would be the inevitable components, whether consciously or unconsciously perceived, in a film set in Las Vegas. Sean Connery, one feels, had to go there for *Diamonds are Forever* before hopping off the Bond-wagon for good. No one has yet made a major picture in Vegas—the nearest geographically that anyone has got is *Greed* fifty years ago, and the proximity of Stroheim's final Death Valley sequence is near enough.

San Francisco on the other hand is open to experience, many-faceted, rich in vista and deep in perspective, full of self-consciously noted historical associations yet oddly innocent and unsullied on the surface, snobbish yet basically egalitarian, exuding a sense of spontaneous fun but still strait-laced, a town where anything apparently goes, though still curiously vulnerable to evil.

John Ford's Tombstone: 'My Darling Clementine'





San Francisco movie: Clint Eastwood in 'Dirty Harry'

Such qualities determine the mood of films as different as *Bullitt*, *Petulia*, *What's Up, Doc?*, *Dirty Harry*, *Vertigo*.

Los Angeles is labyrinthine, insecure in its economic confidence, morally ambivalent, rootless and uncentred, role-playing and in search of an identity, hedonistic yet puritanical, and always suggesting the possibility of a key to its essential enigma, a map to its maze, or alternatively urging the seeker to abandon hope, to accept, withdraw, or transcend it through drugs or mystical agencies. Comedies, tragedies or melodramas set there all draw on this complex nexus of responses. So does Reyner Banham's *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, one of the outstanding books on the area. Very precisely, the most penetrating recent movie about the Californian identity, John Boorman's *Point Blank*, begins and ends in dreamlike fashion in San Francisco, with its central diamond-hard section taking place in Los Angeles. Any kind of film is possible in New York, but Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles propose specific moral, social and psychological images of America.

My last week in the States was spent in Los Angeles and in driving down there on the coast highway from San Francisco. This is the beautiful rugged country celebrated by Robinson Jeffers and Henry Miller, but also less impressively, if unfortunately no less memorably, by *Play Misty for Me* and *The Sandpiper*. Before going into Los Angeles we naturally made a ritual pilgrimage to Hearst's castle at San Simeon. It is of course Kane's Xanadu to the life, as vulgar, ugly and enchanting. And when Welles to avoid libel transposed the site to Florida, did he have in mind the vicious gubernatorial campaign of 1934 in which Hollywood and Hearst joined forces to defeat Upton Sinclair, threatening that if Sinclair became governor of California the movie industry would move to Florida? At San Simeon it was revealed that, piling artifice on fantasy, a sequence of *Spartacus* had been shot in Hearst's hideous imported Greco-Roman bathing pool and temple. (On the back of my guide book to

the castle there's a colour picture of the bath with the parenthetical suggestion 'Makes an excellent conversation piece when framed'. I'd certainly frame it if Stanley Kubrick came to dinner, to turn to in the event of our running out of conversation.)

After our early morning tour of San Simeon we sped to L.A., where our children were eager to join the last tour of the day around Universal Studios. We were kept waiting for half-an-hour with nothing to look at beyond the turnstile except a Madame Tussaud-type dummy of Alfred Hitchcock floating in a pool with a dagger in his chest and the label 'Frenzy' on his paunch. (I now know that he should have had an old-school tie knotted around his neck, but that's show business, and as the Master would be the first to point out, what would Japanese visitors—of whom there were several, busy snapping the waxen corpse—have made of it?) The studio tour was an unexpected joy, with everything laid on to impress us and make us feel almost as if we were shareholders. Among the many pleasures, I recall seeing Anthony Perkins' gothic hilltop home from *Psycho* and the street down which Robert Preston led his 76 trombones in *The Music Man* (neither of them Universal pictures).

The three-hour tour ended with an invitation to participate in a demonstration of how an episode of *Adam-12* (a popular TV police series, a sort of L.A. *Z Cars*) was made. That lifelong home-movie addict William Randolph Hearst died too early to acquire his own video-tape machine. In a matter of minutes a team of Universal technicians cast *Adam-12* from our touring company, put a few of us in costumes, conducted rapid rehearsals on a composite three-part set, and then mixing shots from the actual TV programme and some prepared atmospheric soundtracks with our amateur efforts, came up with fifteen minutes of highly professional film that was projected in colour within three minutes of completion. We were all suitably impressed by this new, cool revelation of the movie mystique—including my children, who figured with me as spectators in the

final shot in which a pair of thieves were led away from a bar by two cops. In a congratulatory post-production interview with the director, one of the cops turned out to be an airline pilot, the other a professor of sociology.

Our last day in Los Angeles was largely devoted to selling our car—which took longer than expected as Californian dealers are reluctant to touch an automobile with Texas licence plates. As we went about this task (I have to say it reminded me of Janet Leigh exchanging cars in *Psycho*), and constantly returning to our motel at the end of Hollywood Boulevard, we kept meeting the people who were shooting a picture on the floor below our room. Their activities monopolised the attentions of the staff. But on inquiry the crew were as ignorant of the enterprise as the motel's proprietors. A Detroit-based production company had hired them for the day and they were in the dark as to the plot, performers, director, and even had certain doubts about the title. 'All I know,' one of the camera assistants said to me, 'is that the girl's got to come to the door naked under her housecoat and while she's talking her right tit has to drop out—you know, casually, so you'd hardly notice.'

After selling the car I went down Hollywood Boulevard to pay my respects to Larry Edmunds, the famous movie bookshop, and picked up a copy of a Californian journal that I hadn't looked at for years. To my horror I came across an attack upon myself based on a long forgotten SIGHT AND SOUND review of a book by an English movie writer, whom the author of the article was putting up as the only significant British critic since the war. I was denounced as a paid hatchet-man of the British Film Institute, a snide sophisticate who represented everything that was bad in European film criticism. My wife joined me and when she'd dutifully read the offending piece we retreated to Hollywood Boulevard ready for a soothing drink at our motel. A hundred yards and some fifty red-and-gold stars in the pavement later, each celebrating a great personality of international show business, many of whom had fallen in the line of duty, we passed a pair of lesbians, one short, the other enormously tall, and neither an uncommon sight on the Boulevard. As we went by, still engaged in earnest discussion, the larger, more menacing of the two, took a deft pace towards us, crooked her neck, thrust her face into mine and said: 'That's a real speech impediment you've got there.' ■

Universal tour: Hitchcock meets his match





DRUMS ALONG THE MEKONG

Joseph McBride

I love America I am apolitical

—John Ford, 1964

John Ford's long delayed war documentary *Vietnam! Vietnam!* was quietly released by the United States Information Agency in September 1971, almost four years after it went into production. The USIA, the government's foreign propaganda organisation, decided in late 1967 to make 'a major film' on Vietnam. Supervising the production, originally titled *Inside Vietnam*, was Bruce Herschensohn, an outspoken hawk who recently resigned from the USIA in a dispute with Senator J. William Fulbright over an agency film on the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Principal photography began in Vietnam on October 1, 1968, and was finished nine weeks later. The editing was completed in June 1971.

Tad Szulc of the New York *Times* reported on June 10, 1971 that USIA director Frank Shakespeare had decided not to release the film because 'the changing military and political situation in Vietnam, as well as domestic political considerations, now raised doubts on the film's value as convincing and productive propaganda.' Szulc quoted a USIA source as saying, 'It's a dead duck and it will stay in the can,' but added that Shakespeare felt the film would be 'a valuable contribution to scholars in 1981 or 1999.'

USIA films are prohibited by law from public screening in the United States, in order to prevent any influence on domestic politics; I was able to see the Ford film at a

private screening at USIA headquarters in Washington, D.C. An agency spokesman denied that there had ever been a decision made to shelve the film, though he admitted that it is now considered 'passé' and has received few screenings abroad because of its 'unpopular' subject matter. The USIA's official description of the film is cautiously worded: 'The film deals exclusively with the decade of the 1960s and closes as of Dec. 31, 1969. It covers reasons why the United States and its Allies became involved in Vietnam and the problems arising from our involvement during the decade. It does not include current events in Vietnam nor the continuing de-escalation of our military participation subsequent to the 1960s. Its

purpose therefore is historical. It is the agency's view that whatever develops, the subject of Vietnam will be discussed as a part of U.S. foreign policy for years to come, and in this context the film will serve its purpose over an extended period of time.'

Although *Vietnam! Vietnam!* is the most expensive film the USIA has ever made (\$252,751), it had been shown by only 29 of the agency's 176 posts during its first eight months of release. The *Times* report actually may have embarrassed the USIA into releasing the film, which might otherwise have been left to a quiet oblivion. Aside from a few requests for prints from American Congressmen, there has been 'almost no interest' in *Vietnam! Vietnam!* in the United States since its release, the spokesman said.

When I interviewed Ford in 1970, he gave me a characteristically cryptic explanation of his role on the project: 'Just supervised it. Nothing to direct. What I did is generally went out there and said, "That'd be a good thing to shoot, let's shoot that".' From this I gathered that Ford had been standing alongside the camera crew during much of the shooting, suggesting shots if not actually directing them. The film seems to bear this out: even though there are some obviously non-Fordian visual elements (zoom shots, telephoto lenses, rack-focusing), many sequences seem very Fordian in emphasis, particularly those dealing with the war's disruption of families, farms and villages, and the suffering of women, children and old

registering people for the draft. This is why we tried to cover, and we did cover, a complete story on a Vietnamese boy leaving his home and reporting for the draft . . . which never got into the picture.

Was it your idea to show more of the military mobilisation of the country?

Yes. The theory behind the film was that we and the Allies were helping South Vietnam to (a) protect itself, and (b) develop its own capability for its own protection. We did an ARVN Air Force story which never appeared in the film. We did a story on tank training. We did a story starting with basic training and going into what we call in this country AIT—advanced individual training—and then proceeding into unit training.

Why was the military stuff de-emphasised in the final cut?

I don't know. A lot of the emphasis in the story as I conceived it and shot it was on what they call the 'civil action' activities, such as building schools, building orphanages, major construction projects, and so forth. And at the same time we did do tremendous coverage on the development of the ARVN military machine which apparently was not considered suitable for use in the film.

Why was it that you weren't involved in the cutting? Was that your choice, the USIA's, or Ford's?

I'd rather not comment on that. It's kind of touchy.

Does the film satisfy you—does it express your point of view now?

Sorry—I really don't want to comment on that.

Have you had the impression that the USIA hasn't made much of an effort to show the film?

The release date of the film was September '71. I finished shooting in December '68. So draw your own conclusions.

Do you have any idea how the story got started that the film was being shelved?

Oooh boy . . .

Vietnam! Vietnam! is one of the grisliest war films ever made, yet it is also one of the most jingoistic and hawkish films Ford has ever been associated with. How to explain this bizarre dichotomy? It doesn't much matter what the narrator (Charlton Heston) is saying while we see the bloated corpses of infants festering in the sun or the dredging of a mass grave for bones and rotting flesh—even though it is all being blamed on the Vietcong, it is hard to take sides when you are on the verge of throwing up. But how can Ford be so naive as to present the South Vietnamese army as heroic freedom fighters, or to show American medics washing the feet of burned Vietnamese (one of the more flagrant misuses of religious metaphor in the cinema) while ignoring the American use of napalm on civilian targets? One of Ford's admirers once suggested that his militarism is not as offensive as it should be because it is essentially *innocent*. Although that judgment would outrage many viewers, especially when watching a film like *Vietnam! Vietnam!*, I think it is correct. It is obvious from *Vietnam! Vietnam!* that Ford really believes in the old rhetoric about 'preserving the independence' of South Vietnam, despite *The Pentagon Papers'* admission that 'South Vietnam was essentially the creation of the

United States' (a 1961 document); really believes that the present phase of the war started because the Vietcong came down from the North and terrorised women and children. In fact, according to the *Papers*, during the period between 1956 and 1959, when the Vietcong insurgency began, 'Most of those who took up arms were South Vietnamese and the causes for which they fought were by no means contrived in North Vietnam.' The *New York Times'* analysis of the *Papers* concludes that the war 'began largely as a rebellion in the South against the increasingly oppressive and corrupt regime of Ngo Dinh Diem.'

Glib as it may sound, Ford's view of the war is reminiscent of a Western. The Vietcong are the bad guys, the peasants are the terrorised farmers, the Americans are the Earp Brothers come to clean up the territory so that decent folks can go to church and set up schools. Such an innocent vision of society is charming in the archaic context of the Western genre, but debilitating and ridiculous in a documentary of modern war. I would not pretend that *Vietnam! Vietnam!* is an aberration in Ford's career—Raymond Durnat, describing Ford's view of history as 'the homeric American whitewash', referred to *Drums Along the Mohawk* as *Drums Along the Mekong*—but I would suggest that it tends to exaggerate certain tendencies in Ford which are usually restrained by aesthetic and historical distance.* One reason Ford's war propaganda films are so much less complex than his war dramas is that his instincts are so much finer than his conscious attitudes. *The Battle of Midway* is Ford's finest documentary, and one of his greatest films, precisely because it minimises rhetoric and propaganda and simply observes the realities of aerial attack, battle fatigue and homesickness.

The combat scenes retained in Ford's final cut of *Vietnam! Vietnam!* are as anachronistic as the film's politics. All of the elaborate footage shot by Sherman Beck about the beefing-up of the Saigon army with sophisticated modern weaponry has vanished, and we are left with a few glimpses of American 'advisers' talking on telephones and using maps to explain the terrain to native soldiers. We never see a massed concentration of American troops; in fact we see only one shot fired by an American (a surprising moment—a Vietcong prisoner being shot in the head just off-screen). If it weren't for the telephones, a still sequence of aerial reconnaissance photos, and a sequence showing American helicopters evacuating a village, it might almost be a 19th century war we are watching, a war fought by foot soldiers with rifles and handguns.

To pursue the *Drums Along the Mekong* analogy further, the South Vietnamese in this film could best be compared to Ford's 'good' Indians: their folkways are presented with reverence, fascination, and dignity, yet there is an unavoidable undertone of condescension and distrust which is even-

*In a provocative article on Ford's politics in the August 1971 issue of *The Velvet Light Trap*, Russell Campbell observed, 'Given time and detachment, Ford could conceivably create a tribute to the resistance of the Vietnamese people fully as powerful as his salute to the Cheyenne. Their dislocation is, if only Ford would see it, comparable . . .'



The innocent vision: 'Drums Along the Mohawk'

tually translated into political terms when the American 'advisers' arrive. The heaviest onus of blame is placed on the Russians: the sequence of reconnaissance photographs (used as justification for the sending of US troops into Vietnam) is a succession of jump cuts moving gradually down from a great height to the initials USSR stencilled on a shipment of weapons. And during a sequence showing President Nixon speaking at the United Nations, Ford cuts to a shot of Gromyko and Dobrynin looking bored and cynical as Nixon declares, 'We in the United States want to end this war.' The film's implication is that the Vietnamese are basically a simple, pacific people whose Northern family branch has been led astray by evil outside agents—remarkably similar to the way the bad Indians in *Drums Along the Mohawk* are manipulated by evil John Carradine into fighting for the British. Ford's explanation of black unrest in the contemporary United States is just as simplistic: 'They're being influenced from outside. Some other country . . . the poor Negroes are getting the blame.'

The emphasis the film places on Nixon's speech (it is the longest, and last, statement by a politician in the film) and the dilemma of American prisoners' wives is a clear indication of the political metamorphosis the film obviously underwent during the long editing process. Production began in the last year of the Johnson administration, and after Nixon was elected, work on the film continued only 'out of sheer bureaucratic momentum', a USIA official told Szulc. Although Ford describes himself as 'a liberal Democrat' and says that he 'adored' John F. Kennedy, the film falsely places the responsibility of sending American soldiers into Vietnam solely on Kennedy's shoulders and ignores the 'advisers' sent there during the Eisenhower administration; it also ignores Nixon's hawkishness during the Eisenhower years. After the sequence of

reconnaissance photographs, the film cuts to a television tape of a Kennedy speech to the people of South Vietnam (putting the viewer physically in the position of a Vietnamese) as Kennedy pledges 'our continued assistance in the development of your capabilities to maintain your freedom and to defeat those who wish to destroy that freedom.' Cut to an American soldier talking on a field telephone in Vietnam and then to a long line of airborne American helicopters as the narrator says, 'And so the Americans came to Vietnam.'

Eisenhower is later shown making a brief statement in defence of American war policy during the 1960s, but his first statement in the film, more personal in tone, makes him seem like a prophet: 'If you're going to fight a war, I believe in winning—because you're losing lives. And this is one thing that ought to be the number one priority. And whenever you get into a war, my own ideas are, get everything you can, as fast as you can, use everything you can and get it over with.' The film seems to be saying that the United States should have listened to the old warrior and not to those indecisive Democrats who forced the military into fighting an unwinnable war. Ike's first remark comes immediately after Fulbright says that the war should be 'compromised and I don't mean by that that we run out and leave. I don't advocate we just say forget it at all. It isn't of the kind of importance that would cause great nations to go to an all-out war.'

If Ford had any doubts, as a professional military man, about American tactics in Vietnam, they undoubtedly took second place to his distaste for the harsh rhetoric of many war protestors. When asked in 1970 what aspects of American society most dismayed him, Ford replied, 'I'm worried about these riots, these students.' The 'establishment' anti-war figures such as Fulbright, Senator Ernest Gruening and Dr. Benjamin Spock are treated with relative respect in the second part of the film, but the student protestors and their Pied Piper, Eugene McCarthy, are treated with outright contempt. McCarthy's statement that the United States should accept a coalition government including the NLF is instantly answered by President Thieu saying, 'The purpose of Communists is to have a coalition government and from that to dominate South Vietnam under the Communist regime.' The student protestors are usually seen as a noisy, disorganised mob and are seldom allowed to speak as individuals. In the rare instances when they do, their remarks seem either vague or impractical. The first one to speak (identified only as 'Student') is a nervously grinning girl who says she is against the war because 'I lost a very good friend over there and all of a sudden it brought it home here.' Her statement is sandwiched between Dean Rusk asking for 'more compassion and more sympathy' for the civilians killed by the Vietcong and Ronald Reagan observing, 'All of us tend to place a greater value on our own people.' (Reagan said recently that his one great regret as an actor was that he never appeared in a John Ford movie. His wish has been granted.) After the girl finishes her statement, Ford holds on her face for several seconds as her lips continue to twitch round her large, unattractive teeth; it's as if he is saying, 'Look at this poor confused girl. She

knows not what she says.'

The point is made even more explicitly in the film's most bizarre episode, a confrontation on a Saigon street between some American protestors and a 'Hungarian freedom fighter' who delivers a hysterical tirade about patriotism. It is tempting to think of this sequence as a Brechtian alienation device—what the man is saying is a virtual synopsis of the film's 'message', but his behaviour is so manic that it casts doubt on the sanity of the message. 'You bastards,' he shouts, arms waving, eyes rolling. 'You schtupid idiots. I would shoot you all like the Russians will shoot you if they come . . . I am ashamed for America and I am not American . . . It is nothing new is people dying for their freedom. People have to die for their children, for their future so they're free.' Towards the end of the harangue Ford cuts to a slow zoom into the face of a young woman protestor furrowing her brow in contemplation; depending on one's political persuasion, her expression could be read as either 'She begins to see the light' or 'She takes pity on a lunatic.'

After the Nixon speech, Ford cuts to another anti-war march and the narrator says in a weary, fed-up tone, 'But the demonstrations and parades continued with the yell of, "Hell no, we won't go!"' Then there is a cut to a long shot of five South Vietnamese brigades marching up a hill towards the camera—a serpentine procession stretching into the horizon singing what is presumably the Vietnamese equivalent of 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon'. As the grimly determined freedom fighters tramp past the camera at eye level with flags held high and are seen through the columns of a triumphal arch, the narrator continues, 'In South Vietnam, there were other parades where cries of "Hell no, we won't go!" were nonexistent; for without defence their families and country would live no more.' By 1971, even the USIA must have realised how silly this sequence appeared as the United States went into the final stages of its so-called 'Vietnamization' programme, abandoning South Vietnam to the hopelessly inept, demoralised, and corruption-riddled Saigon army and a desperate escalation of American air force.

The only enduring value of the film is the footage documenting the horrors inflicted on the people of Vietnam. It would be ingenuous to pretend that the Fordian themes

of the sanctity of family and motherhood serve a purely humanistic function in *Vietnam! Vietnam!*; propaganda films have always placed great stress on the enemy's abuse of women and children. But the film's atrocity scenes are so appalling, and the combat scenes so unromantic, that even the most fervent hawk would be forced to reflect on the obscenity of war. Children learning to walk with artificial limbs; two women carrying someone's remains from the mass grave in a little bundle on a pole; an old woman standing confused and naked in the aftermath of a massacre; a sleeping baby transferred hand-to-hand from a helicopter; a woman whose blouse has large bloodstains on each breast; a little boy hobbling through a field on his one remaining leg—the scenes of carnage in Ford's recent war films are nothing in comparison with this reality.

The film ends with an apocalyptic acceleration of rhetoric, cutting from the parade of Saigon troops to a long shot of the United States Capitol dome outlined against a blood-red sunset. Torches being carried in an anti-war rally on Pennsylvania Avenue are linked in the editing with a torch being passed through a crowd of South Vietnamese holding a night-time vigil. The chaotic appearance of the anti-war rally and the garish newsreel colour contrast sharply with the solemn, quasi-religious beauty of the Vietnamese vigil. How far Ford has come from the exuberant faith of his early American torchlight parades—how far from the joyous crowd flooding Pennsylvania Avenue to see President Lincoln 'bind up the nation's wounds' in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*. The closing shot is a fade-out on the huge communal flame used to light the Vietnamese torches: 'The flames were still bright on December 31, 1969. Whether that fire would be a permanent light of freedom or would be extinguished was not to be known within the decade. The United States had given lives and treasure and prestige to buy time for the South Vietnamese to face alone what had to be faced. In the last year of the Sixties, the troops of the United States were leaving behind trained and equipped South Vietnamese to defend their destiny, for the guns of the North—within the South—were not silent. Though the decade was done, the struggle of the South Vietnamese to be free was still unfinished.' There is no end title. ■

Sherman Beck's unit in Vietnam



GOPPOLA AND

Stephen Farber

In Hollywood, old-fashioned genre movies—mainly police and gangsters—are at a premium. The socially conscious rock-scored 'youth movie' of a couple of years ago seems as obsolete as silent comedy. Interestingly, several of the huge successes of the past year are traditional genre pieces by young directors: William Friedkin's *The French Connection*, Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* and *What's Up, Doc?* and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*. Friedkin, Bogdanovich and Coppola are the holy triumvirate in Hollywood today. They gratify the moguls because they've been tamed. They've tried their low-budget arty-crafty movies (*The Birthday Party*, *Targets*, *The Rain People*), but now they're playing the company way; they've learned how to make money for the industry. Friedkin, Bogdanovich and Coppola are the models for other young directors working their way up through the ranks, and this is a dubious blessing; new directors who reject the old formulas altogether will not have an easy time surviving.

All of these movies are enormously profitable, but *The Godfather* is a box-office phenomenon that dwarfs the others. It may even turn out to be the top-grossing film in history. All by itself *The Godfather* has revived a good deal of confidence in the old industry machinery; it has even been called the *Gone with the Wind* of gangster movies. Coppola deserves a success, since he is one of the most talented directors of his generation and has not yet had a hit. And the film deserves its success too, for it is the rare giant-grossing film that is also a good movie—not a great work of art, but a solid, intelligent, beautifully crafted genre entertainment. Still, one can't help feeling a little apprehensive for Coppola. Has a good director ever had that kind of success and continued to be a good director?

Coppola has always been an interesting mixture of businessman and artist. He is one of the first Hollywood directors to come from one of the American film schools. He did some work for Roger Corman (who also helped to launch Bogdanovich), but he didn't have to serve a terribly long apprenticeship, and his first major film, *You're A Big Boy Now*, was at once ragged and slick, experimental and commercially oriented, cleverly calculated to tap the audience for 'youthful spontaneity' that the Richard Lester-Beatles movies had created. It was just the kind of first feature that a promising young director was expected to make; but underneath the gloss, there were unmistakably powerful and imaginative passages—the obsessive, funny, sometimes frightening scenes of sexual fantasy, and the hero's relationship with a vicious, emasculating dream seductress.



THE GODFATHER

After *Fimian's Rainbow*, a straight commercial project, Coppola turned to *The Rain People*, an intimate film made completely independently, with a small cast and crew and a long shooting schedule. That freedom and leisure showed in the final product. In contrast to Coppola's earlier movies, *The Rain People* displayed a strong sense of personal exploration, passion and integrity. Suddenly the strain one had felt in Coppola's earlier films was gone. The performances were without exception superb, and in fact there are moments of acting in *The Rain People*—Shirley Knight's first telephone conversation with her husband, or the bedroom scene between Knight and Robert Duvall—that set a standard for other films to match. The interesting premise of the movie—a frustrated housewife leaves her husband on a cross-country drive to search for herself—is unfortunately unfulfilled. Coppola loses his grip on the character; *The Rain People* is a dramatic failure, though always absorbing because of Coppola's responsiveness to the American locations and the people along the way.

Around the time of the film's release, Coppola announced the opening of his own studio in San Francisco, American Zoetrope, which was to serve as a production centre for younger film-makers who wanted to work outside Hollywood. Warner Brothers supplied some of the backing and agreed to distribute the films, and it promised to be a vital alternative to mainline commercial filmmaking. But with the box-office failure of *The Rain People* and other 'youth movies' at the same time, studio interest evaporated. Coppola struggled to keep the company afloat, but he was unsuccessful. He finally announced that Mario Puzo's garish best-seller *The Godfather* would be his next movie. After one of the quietest, most uncompromisingly personal movies in American film history, Coppola returned to Hollywood to do the biggest Mafia soap opera of them all.

What the cynics didn't know was that Coppola would bring the sensitivity and personal commitment of *The Rain People* to *The Godfather's* sprawling canvas. In *The Godfather* Coppola has almost reconciled the artistic and commercial impulses in his work. It is a spectacular that isn't vulgar or overblown or contemptuous of the audience; on the contrary, it seems smaller than it is—always thoughtful, often intimate, with a depth of feeling in its portrait of Italian family life that must grow from understanding and firsthand experience. Coppola has not sacrificed the quiet perception that he brought to *The Rain People*, but this time he has a strong narrative line to give the film dramatic momentum.

Considering the limitations of the material, it is remarkable how much social commentary Coppola manages to introduce. *The Godfather* covers about a decade, from the end of World War II to the mid-1950s, and indirectly the film suggests a good deal about American society as a whole during that period. Without belabouring the point, the Coppola-Mario Puzo script draws the links between the Mafia and all respectable quarters of America, from Washington to Hollywood. Politicians, police, journalists are on the payroll; Italian undertakers, bakers, and would-be actors come to the

godfather for favours. Perhaps one reason for the widespread cooperation with the Mafia is the fact that it conducts business like any major American corporation. Business and board meetings have the cool, impersonal flavour of any stockholders' conference. Capital gain is the main order of business; violence is mentioned only casually.

The Corleones would in fact be difficult to distinguish from many respectable immigrant families. Their goals of material success are certainly estimable; the godfather is a perfect example of the American self-made man. The film plays up the contrast between the ruthless business ethics of the mafiosi, and the warmth and banality of their home lives. Don Corleone agrees to have some hoods disposed of, then goes out to pose for photographers at his daughter's wedding. Children are playing in the streets and his wife calls out with a reminder about the groceries as an assassin leaves home to execute an unreliable associate. This separation of business and personal ethics may be exaggerated in the Mafia, but Coppola perceives that the same confusion of values is characteristic of a whole generation of Americans. Until the last few years, most businessmen assumed that there was no correlation between what a man is personally and what he may be forced to do in his work. One could be a good family man and also a ruthless businessman, trading the Judeo-Christian ethic for jungle ethics when the dollar was at stake. That was an accepted part of American life.

Another reason for the enduring power of the Mafia is that families like the Corleones operate under a more primitive code of justice and retribution than American society allows; they invest their work with Old World passion. In the brilliant climactic sequence, Michael stands as godfather at the baptism of his nephew while his assassins

are settling an old family score; the powerful intercutting suggests that executing vengeance is one of the primal rituals of life. The Mafia brings a barbaric ferocity into American life, and satisfies the repressed but universal lust for revenge.

Here too the commentary on American history is provocative. The immigrant generation that struggled for a footing in America may have been ruthless and materialistic, but they tried to bring a measure of personal feeling into everything they did. Businesses were family businesses; uneducated immigrants sold their souls so that their children could have a different kind of life. But in a streamlined corporate America, all transactions are impersonal. The film hints at this change in style as it follows the ascendance of Michael to the position of Don Corleone. Unlike his father, Michael has the steely coldbloodedness of the new faceless tycoon. (Many of these ideas about the Mafia—the parallels between organised crime and normal American corporate life, the sterilisation of big business—were articulated in a Mafia film of a few years ago, Martin Ritt's *The Brotherhood*. *The Godfather* is better directed and better acted, but the two films have a good deal in common; critics who praise the originality of *The Godfather* seem to have astonishingly short memories.)

An intriguing sub-theme is the sexual bias built into American society. The film constantly emphasises the priority given to men in the Corleone family. 'May their first child be a masculine child,' a well-wisher tells Don Corleone on the day of his daughter's wedding. At the family dinner table no one discusses business; the women are sheltered, forced to remain inside a domestic cocoon. The Sicilian sequence helps to locate the origins of this sexual prejudice in the Old World ideals of woman-

Marlon Brando as Don Vito Corleone, the Godfather





'The Godfather': Diane Keaton (Kay) and Al Pacino (Michael Corleone)

hood, a glorified conception of woman as a goddess who is automatically removed from mundane affairs—and therefore not really taken seriously.

It is tempting to elaborate on this theme in view of Coppola's other films, which seem very concerned—if ambivalent—about the question of the oppression and emancipation of women. The final image of *The Godfather* underscores Coppola's concern. When Michael's wife Kay asks him if he had anything to do with the murder of his sister's husband, he lies to her, comforting her with the patronising affection one would show a child. She leaves the room, but sees the other mafiosi come in to pay tribute to their new godfather. Kay stares, puzzled and horrified, then the door is closed and the screen goes to black; we feel she is excluded forever from everything important in her husband's life. That haunting conclusion exemplifies the film's ability to enrich its melodrama with a full-scale commentary on the failures of a generation.

Many individual vignettes in *The Godfather* are masterly. The opening wedding sequence—which runs close to thirty minutes, introduces all the major characters and establishes the tensions of the film in a rich tableau of Italian family ritual—is itself a classic set-piece. If nothing else in *The Godfather* ever quite reaches that level, there are other marvellous sequences: the tense murder in the restaurant, where Michael takes his place in the family; a moving, beautifully written scene between the failing Don and Michael, the father speaking haltingly of his own frustrated dreams for Michael while at the same time compulsively reiterating the battle plans for retention of the business; the death of Don Corleone while he plays with his grandson; the baptism and ritual murder sequence at the climax. The film represents a union of Coppola's technical gifts with his understanding of actors. Visually it is a stunning work. Gordon Willis' slightly washed-out colour photo-

graphy instantly evokes the 1940s, and Nino Rota's music adds to the nostalgic mood—particularly in the Hollywood sequence, a witty allusion to a dreamlike style of movie-land glamour that has all but disappeared. The performances are without exception superb. As in *The Rain People*, Coppola achieves some of his finest moments through the actors. For example, the desolate expression on Brando's face when he learns that his favourite son has been implicated in the family affairs defines their relationship in just a few seconds of screen time.

Given all of the talent, even brilliance at work in *The Godfather*, one can only hope that from now on Coppola will spend his talents on somewhat more deserving projects. He almost transforms *The Godfather* into a major film—almost, but not quite. The plot is so elaborate and methodical that it prevents some elements in the film—the transformation of Michael, and the evolution of a new-style bureaucratic Mafia—from being fully explored. We seize at hints in between the obligatory scenes that push the plot forward. Particularly in the middle of the film, there are long sections that work entirely on the level of narrative suspense and surprise, and on a second viewing anyway, these sections lag. *The Godfather* does not quite fuse its divergent elements; it remains brilliant in pieces, always engrossing, but not fully satisfying.

Coppola is at an interesting turning-point in his career. He has his pick of expensive commercial projects—and he has already written the script for *The Great Gatsby* (a vehicle for Ali MacGraw), and signed to do the sequel to *The Godfather*. At the same time he seems genuinely committed to resisting as many of the pressures as he can. His next film will be *The Conversation*, a modest project that he originally designed for American Zoetrope.

I spoke to Coppola at the mansion in San Francisco that he is renovating for his

family. In the basement carpenters and electricians were working to install a comfortable screening room. Coppola has brought a little bit of Hollywood flavour to the more bohemian San Francisco terrain. It was the first interview he had given since the release of *The Godfather*.

You're one of the first American directors who came up through the film schools. Did your background at UCLA give you anything useful?

I was disappointed in film school. I had thought about it when I was very young, and the whole time I was an undergraduate theatre major I was looking forward to film school. When I got there, I realised that it was nowhere near as much fun or as satisfying as the theatre experience had been. I found that the other students were not really interested in film as a more complete humanistic art form. They were interested in the technical side of it only. They didn't seem to have any breadth or depth to them. I was at UCLA film school from about 1960 to 1962, and I barely had two friends in that time. There was none of the camaraderie that I had imagined in high school in my *La Bohème* imagination.

My fantasy was you're working on the films and drinking wine at night, and there are beautiful girls who are working on the films and you're all in it together. It wasn't like that. It was very lonely. However, there was the chance to learn about some of the technology. There were a couple of good courses. One of my directing teachers was Dorothy Arzner, and she was always very sweet to me and encouraging. She was one of the better influences. Also, through contacts at film school, notices on the bulletin board, I did get my job with Roger Corman. Roger always had the policy of getting bright guys and girls from the colleges. He'd say to his secretary, 'Call up UCLA and get some film student who'll work cheap.'

What did you do for Corman at first?

I was hired to do the English translation of a Russian space picture. I couldn't speak Russian, but I was supposed to make up an English story and dialogue to fit this Russian movie. The Russian movie was very sentimental and philosophical, whereas Roger wanted to make it into a monster picture. I had the job of doing the looping and writing the new dialogue for it. I got a flat figure, something like \$200 for a million weeks work. Outrageous, but I just wanted to get in that office because it sounded like they were really going to make movies there. I tried to impress Roger. I'd deliberately work all night so when he'd arrive in the morning he'd see me slumped over the moviola. He started to see me as an all-purpose guy. Roger was always really nice to me. He'd pay you nothing to do a film, but your success then was your own and he never had any ties on you. I always felt grateful to him, and I like him a lot.

Then you did a film for him?

Roger could never resist a bargain. In other words, if he's making a film for AIP and the whole crew is in Europe, he right away will start figuring that for another \$20,000 he could take the unit and make another film. We were in Europe doing *The Young Racers*, and I was Roger's assistant. I thought if I came up with a script he might

let me take the unit and just go make another film. That's how I did *Dementia 13*. I described a scene of some lady who goes into a pond and sees the corpse of a little child and gets axed to death—everything I knew Roger would like. So he gave me 20 grand and said I could do it. Then I wrote the script in three days. It was a good experience. It was the only film I've ever enjoyed working on. We were young and making a feature film! I think that kind of enthusiasm has a lot to do with the fact that when you're young your standards are low. If you shoot something that looks like a real movie, that puts you into euphoria.

What else did you do around that time?

I had won the Samuel Goldwyn writing award at UCLA, and that got me an interview with Seven Arts. I got the job to write the first screenplay for *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. That was in about 1963. From the point I won the Goldwyn award until the present time, I have always had a good exciting career. I've always had money, with the exception of two years ago, when I almost went under. My work at Seven Arts was a good experience because I literally was the house writer, and I wrote three scripts a year and worked on all their projects. In a two and a half year period I wrote about ten or twelve scripts. Then I started getting horny to direct a film. They sent me on a real clunker, *Is Paris Burning?*, which was a very bad experience. They sent me to Paris, which I thought would be great. And I got in lots of arguments, and I was always getting fired. They had so sold out to the Gaullist government that there was nothing to write about. You weren't even allowed to say the word 'Communist' in the script.

All through the writing of *Is Paris Burning?*, to keep myself sane, I was writing *You're A Big Boy Now*. When I came back, I got together with Phil Feldman, who was a Seven Arts executive, and we finally did the film. It was a cheap picture, and we had to do it fast. But I would have to say that I was given a real good chance on that one. I didn't enjoy doing the film, but I think that was my fault. I was scared. My other experiences of directing plays and films had been very pleasurable. This time I was in New York, and it was a real union crew, and I had a limited schedule.

Did it turn out as you had conceived it?

Yes. I tended not to like it very much about two years later. I think the whole style it was made in—that free-wheeling Dick Lester spirit—became the biggest cliché in the world. Actually, it was the first film of its kind that used one of those so-called rock scores, after *A Hard Day's Night*. But by the time it came out, a lot of those things had been used to death. There are still some things in it that I like. I had directed lots of musical comedies in college, and I wanted to make a film that had the energy of a musical comedy. I always thought of *You're A Big Boy Now* as a musical film.

How close was *Patton* to your original script?

I worked six months on that script, around 1964. It was a pretty definitive script. But there was a big time lag, and I never had anything to do with it again. They had rewritten my script many times and thrown it out and got different writers. I was told

that when they finally offered it to George C. Scott, he remembered my script and told them that he would do it if they could use the old script. Scott is the one who resurrected my version. I think the best scenes in the film, like the opening, are word-for-word from my script; in fact, my script was a little more eccentric in that order. They made it a more traditional war film.

Did they follow your conception of Patton?

When I got the job, I was about 24 or 25, and they hired me to write the story of this American hero whom I had never heard of. I knew nothing about the Army except for a year and a half that I spent in military school. I read all about Patton, and I said, 'Wait a minute, this guy was obviously nuts. If they want to make a film glorifying him as a great American hero, it will be laughed at. And if I write a film that condemns him, it won't be made at all.' So I came up with what I thought was a brilliant solution, to make him a man out of his time, a pathetic hero, a Don Quixote figure. That conception was from my script. I thought I would have the best of both approaches. The people who wanted to see him as a bad guy could say, 'He was crazy, he loved war.' The people who wanted to see him as a hero could say, 'We need a man like that now.' And that's exactly the effect the movie had, which is why it was so successful. I was more interested in techniques. I was playing with a presentational style—the idea that you have a character just stand in front of the audience for five minutes, and the audience would know more about him just by looking at him than if you went into his past and told about his family life. That's why the best part of that film, in my opinion, is the opening scene. It was the best scene in my script too.

How did *The Rain People* originate?

I had originally written *The Rain People* in 1960 in college. I could never get on top of it. It was first called *Echoes*, and it was the story of three housewives—a newly married one, an older woman, and one who had a few kids. All go off in a station wagon and leave their husbands. I wrote it for a creative writing class and never finished it; I put it aside and forgot it. Then several years later I got this very romantic idea in my head about Shirley Knight. I didn't know her, but I thought she was very good. She seemed like an American actress who had some substance. Most of my life has been influenced by romantic preconceptions. The idea of writing a film for an actress and making it together, like Antonioni and Monica Vitti, really appealed to me. I saw Shirley Knight at a film festival. She was there with *Dutchman*, and she was crying because someone had been rude to her or whatever. I went up to her and said, 'Don't cry, I'll write you a movie.' And she said, 'You will? That's sweet.' And I did. I went back and I took out this old college draft and decided to make it just one character.

That was just as *Finian's Rainbow* was over. *The Rain People* was also a reaction against *Finian's Rainbow*. You see, after *You're A Big Boy Now*, I made a resolution—I was not going to make that mistake of having a promising first film and going straight into a big Hollywood clunker. And I went and got a small office and started to write the movie I'm doing now, *The*

Conversation. I wrote the first three pages. Then I got a phone call from a guy who asked if I knew anyone who could do *Finian's Rainbow*. I thought about it and gave him some suggestions and hung up. The next day he called back and said, 'What about you?' And somehow it happened, though I had resolved it wouldn't. Partly I decided to do *Finian's Rainbow* because I remembered the show. My father had been in the musical comedy business. It was again a very romantic idea, like wouldn't my father be happy if I did a big musical?

I fought very hard not to change it, which was probably a mistake. I had the idea that if you do *Finian's Rainbow*, you shouldn't rewrite it and update it. I guess I was wrong, because *Finian's Rainbow* was a terrible book originally. The score was great, but this mixture of a leprechaun and gold and a tame civil rights message—it was just the wrong time to make a movie like that. The fact that it was all shot on the back lot also disturbed me. I couldn't shoot on location. Basically *Finian's Rainbow* was a cheat: the idea of taking a \$3½ million musical and sending it out to compete with *Funny Girl*, where they had rehearsed the musical numbers for two months. On *Finian's Rainbow* I improvised all the dancing, and I know nothing about dancing.

Ironically, everyone at Warners thought *Finian's Rainbow* was going to be a big hit; they were just wild about it. This is the joke of the movie business because no one knows anything. The movie was a disaster. But before it was released, they were counting their millions. They decided to blow the picture up to 70 and make it a roadshow picture. And when they did that, they blew the feet off Fred Astaire when he was dancing. No one had calculated the top and bottom of the frame. I just wanted to be done with it, but I was upset thinking that this thing might be an enormous success. I remember telling my wife, 'God, why should I become rich and famous because of this?'

The studio next wanted me to do *Mame*, offered me almost \$400,000 back then, when I was 26 or 27 years old. And I had this brilliant idea: I'm going to force the case, I'm going to do *The Rain People* instead. By just starting to do it, I'll prevent myself from succumbing to all these offers. I remembered what had happened the last time, and I was not going to make the same mistake again. And I decided I was going to do *The Rain People* as I'd always wanted to—with five guys in a station wagon. I used my own money for the first few days, and then Warner Brothers said, 'We'll make it,' and they financed me. Actually, I jumped in too early. I never really finished the script before we shot. But it was a wonderful opportunity. Kenny Hyman and Elliott Hyman literally just gave me the money: \$750,000. I didn't have to talk to anyone, they didn't bother me at all. When it was all over, I showed them the film, and they liked it. That was really a one-of-a-kind experience.

It's my favourite film of all that I've done, including *The Godfather*, but I don't think it works as well as a total film as some others. But the parts that I like, I like a lot, and I felt that *The Rain People* was a good step in the right direction.

Did you shoot in sequence?

Yes, that was the beauty. I was writing it while we were shooting it. It wasn't pre-scouted. We just drove. When I saw something, we would stop. The big parade sequence in Chattanooga, we literally just came across. It was not an ordinary schedule. We shot over a four-month period, but we travelled so much that I would say we shot the equivalent of two or two and a half months. The film was tough because I started having tremendous arguments with Shirley Knight. She's very talented, but she's the only actor I really haven't gotten along with. Usually I get along with actors.

Were your disagreements over the conception of the role?

I don't think Shirley Knight trusted me. I don't think she felt that if she did what I asked her to do it would be a good movie. Whenever an actor starts to distrust the director, he begins to do two things—he's acting and he's also watching out for himself. As I look back on it now, I feel that the real problem was that she had a bad taste in her mouth from her experience in Hollywood; she preferred the theatre. I came along and promised this wonderful idealistic kind of film-making. When we started to work, she realised that it had some realities to it as well, and perhaps she started to feel that this was just another Hollywood movie.

The film loses her character as it goes along.

That was an editorial decision. Maybe I was angry at her, I don't know. The character as I had written it had a lot of the schizophrenia that comes out in the film, but there was also a tremendously compassionate side. The whole basis of the character was that she was a mother, a mother figure. And I didn't feel that I was getting that from Shirley. I would get the high-strung, nervous intensity. I don't know how much I liked that character I saw, whereas I liked the character I had written. I think that affected the cut. I started to throw more weight to Jimmy Caan's character. That is definitely the flaw of the film. Having stated the premise, which is a really interesting premise—even more so when you think of the time it was written—then it should have stuck with her. I chickened out, partly because I didn't have enough time. When a writer doesn't know what else to do with a character, he brings in a new character, you know? So I kept bringing in new, interesting characters, like the cop or the animal farmer, hopefully keeping the audience interested but denying what I should have been doing, which is to explore that main premise.

I'm having the same problem now with *The Conversation*. I wrote the script two or three years ago and, because of fate, did not make it. Now that I'm making it, I'm rewriting it completely. It's the first original screenplay that I'm really *working* on, as opposed to just throwing together. So the two year delay may be a very good thing, because I now find the first script hopelessly inadequate. Just as in *The Rain People*, I set up an interesting premise but then keep going into new things, rather than developing the premise. I'd like to rewrite *The Rain People*.

What were you finally trying to say about



'You're A Big Boy Now': Peter Kastner, Elizabeth Hartman

women? It's a particularly interesting film in the light of the women's movement.

I'm very interested in women in films. I'd like to write and make films about women, and I have some ideas. Maybe some of them are very romantic. But there's a kind of feminine, magical quality, dating back to the Virgin Mary or something I picked up in catechism classes, that fascinates me. I think I've always been empathetic enough to put myself in a woman's place, although they say it's impossible. I hate it when people say you have to be black to write about blacks. I don't agree with that at all. I felt that there must be women who are married and expected to perform in a certain way who are really dying on the inside. I thought it was an interesting statement, that a woman could just wake up and leave. I guess I was reading about existen-

tialism, and I was fascinated by 'the simple, pure act'.

Ultimately, I became fascinated by the idea of the responsibility that we have to one another. And it seemed like a beautiful metaphor to me: a woman decides that she doesn't want this thing that's been parcelled out for her—she doesn't want to be a wife and mother. She goes on this symbolic trip to avoid that, and in the course of it picks up this guy who's a metaphor for her baby that she's pregnant with. It's like a woman driving in the car and having a discussion with this kid who isn't born yet, saying, 'I really can't be responsible for you, I've got to take care of myself.' At the same time she feels a very definite instinctive attachment to him. I never resolved it. I never really said, 'What does all that mean? Does that mean that woman is destined, through her

'The Rain People': Shirley Knight, James Caan





'A parable of corporate life in America. . . ' Don Corleone (Brando) and associates in 'The Godfather'

biological make-up, to be at home with her husband?' I don't know if that's what it means, but I wish the film had answered that. I ended the movie with a *deus ex machina* and a very emotional plea to have a family. She comes to the conclusion that somehow her destiny is to be a mother, and that there is something overwhelming about that.

I wonder if women today wouldn't reject that conclusion?

They rejected it then. They said because I'm a woman and can have a baby does not mean that I should be at home. That's not what I was saying. I was trying to work on an emotional level. I'm fascinated with the whole idea of a family. In the things I'm writing that is constant. Even *The Godfather* is about that, to an extent.

At the time *The Rain People* was released, you were forming your own company, American Zoetrope. What happened to your plans?

Originally Zoetrope started as a kind of Utopian film company which would have equipment and facilities—we still have that—and would produce films and give people an opportunity to do films who might not otherwise get that opportunity. I have many theories as to why it didn't work. Some of them are just logical. I really didn't have enough money. My enthusiasm and my imagination far outpaced any kind of financial logic. Which brings me to number two: I wasn't associated with anyone who was the businessman of the group. It was all me, and I was forging ahead without looking back and seeing whether we could afford this or that. Number three, we were cut short by Warner Brothers, I think unfairly. Number four, we were caught in an enormous industry recession—not only an industry recession, a national recession. On an ideological level, I feel there was no cohesive philosophical idea which held the various people together. The only principle we had was young film-makers and freedom, and it

was very vague. I think that any successful movement or school—like the New Wave or the British films of the 1950s—was held together by an idea or a person. Bazin in France, and in England I think there were certain social ideas that held them together.

Another problem with Zoetrope was that lots of people really abused the place and used it for their own purposes without in any way enriching it. Thousands of people wrote and came and sent their films. At first, to avoid being like a Hollywood studio, we tried to see them. At one point there were three people whose only jobs were reading these letters and talking with these people. I kept that up for seven months. But people would use or borrow or steal our equipment. The first year of operation we lost almost \$40,000 worth of equipment. Other stuff was damaged, and company cars were taken and cracked up. It was tremendously irresponsible. I certainly wasn't wealthy and was at a critical point in my own career. More people thought I was a total fake than anything else. Yet I really spent that whole time and all the money I had plus all the money I could borrow to set this up, and it got stolen and picked away.

Warners backed you at first, didn't they?

Originally my relationship with Warner Brothers was strong, both in practical matters and in the ideology behind the films I said we wanted to do. They wanted to sponsor the programme and saw me as the ideal intermediary between so-called 'established film activity' and the young film-makers that they were then so anxious to become involved with. Zoetrope was going to be like a miniature Mirisch Company looking more toward younger or newer film-makers, and bringing them to Warner Brothers. Warners would finance and distribute the films.

Shortly after that, I would say less than six months later, the whole film business started to look very carefully at so-called

'young film-makers' and more specifically at the money the projects were making. A lot of films, as you remember, came out around 1969 or 1970, which were disasters. Those films cost some very talented people their opportunities. It's not as easy for a guy to get a first film now as it was four years ago.

Warners was one of the first companies—I've got to give them credit—that saw the handwriting on the wall and made a corporate decision: 'We're going in the wrong direction. Let's stop and go into mainline entertainment.' Our projects were not, however, dope and political projects like so many others. They were done by young people, but my feeling is that they could have worked if they had let us go through with them. The failure of *The Rain People* was a big element to Warner Brothers. I remember when the Zoetrope deal was made with Warner Brothers, *The Rain People* hadn't been released. At that time they were favourably disposed towards it—they liked it. Then it was released; it just died, and there was a big change at the company. It confirmed the idea that I was not a money-making film director. Then they took one look at the first cut of George Lucas' *THX-1138* and said, 'We made a big mistake with this guy.' Then they just cancelled everything from top to bottom.

Is it true that Paramount wanted to fire you during the making of *The Godfather*?

I was getting 'fired' every other week. The things they were going to fire me over were, one: wanting to cast Brando. Two: wanting to cast Pacino. Wanting to shoot in Sicily; wanting to make it in period. The very things that made the film different from any other film.

How did you manage to stay on?

By a very slim margin. The first time I almost got fired was over the casting. I think I only stayed on and finally got Pacino because literally they made a corporate decision: 'If we don't do it now, we'll delay for six months, and the book's a bestseller now.' I think they decided it would be more trouble to fire me. The second time I almost got fired was after the shooting started and I was falling a day behind every week: I had told them it would take me 80 days to make the movie, and they gave me a schedule of 53 days. Everyone hated Brando's first day. Bob Evans started to make inquiries to see if Kazan were available. They figured that Kazan was the only director who could really work with Brando. Finally, after the first three weeks, Charlie Bluhdorn, the head of Gulf and Western, had a nice meeting with me and gave me his support. Then I took control of it.

How did they feel about the film before it was released?

I have to give Bob Evans credit there. As soon as he saw the film, he decided it would be a major hit. He staked his career on it, because he was the guy who fought for the length. I was chicken. I was going to cut 15 minutes out. Evans really means well, and has some good intuitions, and he worked very hard on it. I feel the finished version could have been better had they left me alone.

Do you accept Brando's interpretation of the film as a parable of corporate life in America?

Brando got that from me. I always wanted to use the Mafia as a metaphor for America. If you look at the film, you see that it's focused that way. The first line is 'I believe in America.' I feel that the Mafia is an incredible metaphor for this country. Both the Mafia and America have roots in Europe. America is a European phenomenon. Basically, both the Mafia and America feel they are benevolent organisations. Both the Mafia and America have their hands stained with blood from what it is necessary to do to protect their power and interests. Both are totally capitalistic phenomena and basically have a profit motive. But I feel that America does not take care of its people. America misuses and shortchanges its people; we look to our country as our protector, and it's fooling us, it's lying to us. And I thought the reason the book was so popular was that people love to read about an organisation that's really going to take care of us. When the courts fail you and the whole American system fails you, you can go to the Old Man—Don Corleone—and say, 'Look what they did to me,' and you get justice. I think there is a tremendous hunger in this country, if not in the world, for that kind of clear, benevolent authority. Of course that is a romantic conception of the Mafia. There is a difference between the Mafia as it really is and the Mafia as we depict it.

Did you feel constrained at all by the plot?

One of my problems was time. I first felt that I had only two hours. And there were so many obligations that I had. I had to do the Hollywood producer. I hated that whole Hollywood section, but I had to do it because I had to cut off that stupid horse's head. I had to do this, I had to do that. And by the time I did what I had to do, I had already used up the movie. So I never had time to make some of the points I wanted to make. Brando's death scene was very self-indulgent, in that it didn't just say what it had to say and get out. It was like four minutes with this little kid. That's the best scene in the film, I think. I wanted to do more of that kind of stuff, but I couldn't. The only part of the film that I had a nice time doing was Sicily because it was all over by then, and I had a chance to think it out.

Did you feel that you were able to bring some of your own experience to the film? The sense of detail suggested that.

I think the fact that my background is Italian helped enormously. I made a very conscious decision. I wanted to get all the Catholic rituals into the film. That's where the idea of the baptism ending came from. I knew the details. I've almost never seen a movie that gave any real sense of what it was like to be an Italian-American. That's what those weddings were like: the decorations, the dances were all exactly as I remembered them. My father wrote all that music, the wedding music.

I hope to do a lot more in that direction in the second film. The second *Godfather* is going to be very interesting. I'm very excited about it, quite sincerely. Originally I hated the idea. Then Charlie Bluhdorn sat me down and said, 'Are you sure?' And I gave him a list of conditions. I insisted on much more control. What I wanted to do was Part Two, literally designing the second half so that some day they could be played

as a six-hour movie. It's really not a sequel; it's very novelistic in its construction. Let me tell you a great scene that I want to use. My father's a flute player. He was a very fine one; he was a soloist for Toscanini for about ten years. His father was a machinist. One night when he was about nine or ten years old, he was working in the machine shop, and three or four shady characters came in. My grandfather locked the door and put a whole bunch of machine-guns on the table. He had to oil all these machine-guns that they were going to use to kill somebody. My father was watching, and they all said, 'Who's he?' My grandfather said, 'It's all right, that's my son. Don't worry. He is studying the flute.' They asked him to play something. So my father played the flute while my grandfather was fixing the machine-guns. When they left, they gave him \$100 so the kid could continue his studies. Couldn't that be a wild scene?

Now that you've made the blockbuster of all time, you're presumably bombarded with offers. Is that a tough pressure?

No. *The Godfather* made me really rich, so I'm not under financial pressure any more. And a lot of people in Los Angeles I think respect the fact that I don't want to make big commercial pictures. I just don't read any scripts. After this *Godfather* Part Two, which I really am looking forward to, I am going to have a hiatus and change some things. I really want to retire in the sense that I'm not going to work for money any more. There's a possibility now of starting a new company on the order of Zoetrope again. This time I might be able to pull it off. Part of me really wants to take some control and own a piece of that film business, for lots of vindictive, Mafia-like reasons. And I know that I can't do it alone. Billy Friedkin and Peter Bogdanovich and I are old friends. What if we got together? We could really take it over. Possibly we could set up a company that's very profitable, and finance some other people too. I've always been pretty good about giving other people chances. A lot of people talk about it, but even when I was half on my ass, I managed

Francis Ford Coppola



to get some movies off the ground for other people. I would continue to do that.

It seems as if Friedkin and Bogdanovich are more interested in traditional genre films than you are.

I like different kinds of movies. I'd like to make a really great classic horror film. I don't think you have to do just one thing. I've done some plays, and I'm doing an opera this fall. I'd like very much to do live television. But if you ask me what my most serious ambitions are, I'd have to say more modest films about contemporary human situations. I don't know if even that's entirely honest, because you have to remember that I started getting interested in movies in the 1950s. And that's just the period when Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini were being talked about. So I don't know to what extent my desire to do that kind of film dates back to a time when I was very impressionable and thought, 'That's art.' Ironically, five years earlier in France, everyone was very impressed by American movies. So I don't know the real answer. I just want honestly to follow my inclinations.

I feel I have a chance to be a good writer, and that's the difference between me and some of these other guys. I really am interested in writing new material. The other kind of director sits and waits for people to submit scripts; then he takes the best one and rewrites it a little and makes it. But that is not the same as sitting down and writing something that wouldn't have been there if you hadn't imagined it. My romantic idea is to be part of an American New Wave. That dates back to film school.

But I'm in a real state of transition now because ever since I was a little kid, I was raised to be successful and rich. If you were raised as I was, everything you do is to make your family proud of you. It relates to the immigrant thing. Get an education, have a good reputation, have your picture in the paper in a suit, and have lots of money and security. It's hard for me to decide to do anything that doesn't have that as a possible end. Yet I know that's over. I now am as successful as I ever want to be, and I'm pretty rich, so I've got to change all my motivations. I've found that I do not really wear well being famous or successful. All the people who tell me nice things I tend to distrust, and the few people who are critical I take to heart and get really upset about. I'm not really nuts about the people in Los Angeles. I don't respect them too much. So their compliments and the fame I get from that are not very satisfying. I really have had it with publicity, because what happens is lots of people you don't know dislike you, for no reason—perhaps because of jealousy. You get lots of enemies, and you don't get many friends out of it. So that's why this is the first interview I've done since *The Godfather* came out . . .

I'm resentful that people all say, 'Do you think you can top *The Godfather*?' I know I could never top it in terms of financial success, and I don't even intend to try. But I do want to make a film that tops it as a really moving human document. It's like some music I hear once in a while. I hear it and I think, 'Why can't I make a film that feels like that?' That's what I'm going to try to do. I don't know that I'll be able to pull it off.



Above: the dancing Thirties, Willi Forst's 'Maskerade'. Below: echoes of the Expressionist 1920s in the corridors of Werner Hochbaum's 'Die ewige Maske'

Left: Olga Tschechowa in 'Maskerade'; Schünzel's 'Amphitryon'; Harlan's 'Die Reise nach Tilsir'; parade at the Paris Exposition in Harlan's 'Verwehte Spuren'



GERMANY A LOST DECADE

John Gillett

Prejudice dies hard . . . How often has one read that after 1933, when Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry gradually took control over the German film industry, only minor and rather tedious films were made by untalented artists with nothing to say? Of course there is an element of truth in the cliché: totalitarian control imposes major restrictions, and certainly there is nothing in the German cinema of the 1930s which could be described as anti-establishment. Goebbels, however, was clever enough to realise that undiluted propaganda would empty the cinemas; consequently he concentrated his efforts on specially selected subjects, confident that the large-scale programme of entertainment films (with the occasional subliminal 'message') would keep the audiences coming, as well as persuading the outside world that all was well and booming.

With its well-equipped studios, it was not difficult for the industry to produce highly professional escapist cinema, and German films of the 1930s are full of Hollywood copies—tap-dancing chorines aping Busby Berkeley routines; romantic dramas rather eccentrically attached to English upper class settings (anything from Oscar Wilde to Sherlock Holmes); exotic adventure stories like the much-made *Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb*, whose 1938 version by Richard Eichberg had Indian locations richly shot by the great cameraman Hans Schneeberger; and, from *The Congress Dances* (1931) onwards, a stream of musical comedies nostalgic for the 19th century*.

By the early 1930s, Murnau and Leni were dead; Lubitsch had long since departed for Hollywood; Lang, Ophüls and Dupont left Germany around 1933; Pabst's European work after 1932 is of only limited interest. Many other film-makers and artists, especially if they were Jewish, just didn't work any more, or left at various times up to 1939. Even so, enough talent remained: players like Olga Tschechowa, Brigitte Helm, Pola Negri, Jenny Jugo, Gustaf Gründgens, Emil Jannings, Hans Albers; the cameramen Fritz Arno Wagner, Carl Hoffmann, Bruno Mondi, Friedl Behn-Grund; the designers Otto Hunte, Hermann Warm (who goes right back to *Caligari*), Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig; the composers Franz Doelle and Theo Mackeben. These technicians ensured that, whatever the subject matter, there was no break in the great German lighting and design tradition which began in the Expressionist 1920s.

I am not primarily concerned in this article with the openly state-sponsored propaganda films of the 1930s. Leni Riefenstahl's work apart, these were usually crude pictures by minor directors, which I happily consign to oblivion here. Look a little deeper, though, and one discovers (thanks to the recent National Film Theatre season, and some subsequent research in the National Film Archive) about a dozen artists who somehow were making enjoyable 'entertainment' films with an individual flavour, despite the dark forces massing around them. It seems to me as foolish to decry these directors for working at this time as it is to criticise Ozu and Mizoguchi for making beautiful, non-political films at the height of the Sino/Japanese conflict, or

Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko for working (or attempting to work) during the era of the Stalin purges.

Willi Forst—actor, writer, director—was a Viennese who worked in Austria and Germany; like Ophüls, whom he resembles both stylistically and thematically, he carried his world around with him wherever he went. His favourite settings—the Paris of Offenbach and the Opéra Comique and the Vienna of the Strausses—form the backgrounds for ironic musical comedies light years removed from the actual realities of the 1930s. Forst's acting career from the early 1920s onwards seems to have given him remarkable insights into actors' psychology: he used a rich array of star players, including such inveterate scene-eaters as Paula Wessely in *Maskerade* (1934) and Werner Krauss in *Burgtheater* (1936), and moulded them into an ensemble capable of the lightest nuance in look and phrase, and of sustaining the period feeling with impeccable taste. Forst's characters, his lovesick countesses, scheming seducers and would-be actors, inhabit a fashionable, immutable world of theatres, restaurants, ballrooms and boudoirs. The settings reflect their moods and taste, through a pertinent flower arrangement, or the way the afternoon sun highlights the silken shine of a curtain as a lover is anxiously awaited.

Despite his theatrical background, Forst

*The much-travelled Ludwig Berger returned to Germany from Hollywood in the early 1930s to make *Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht* and *Walzerkrieg*, skilfully mixing memories of Clair and Lubitsch in a swirl of Strauss waltzes.

developed a highly sophisticated camera style (the Ophüls comparison again), continually panning with his characters as they exchange conspiratorial glances at a party, or erupting into a wild can-can or a glittering waltz like the one in *Operette* (1940), which begins by swinging through restaurant tables, then out into a patio and halfway down a hill. Through it all, the officers, artists and coquettish ladies (often portrayed by Forst himself, and the admirable Olga Tschechowa) keep up the bantering game of love and deception, with occasional sorties into sly, Lubitsch-style parody. Forst's heroines are surrounded by beautiful women; and, as in the climactic scene of *Bel-Ami* (1939), they usually dispense a kind of justice to all of them. Perhaps almost as a reaction to the times, he favoured happy endings, or at least partial reconciliations. He observed rather than analysed his characters' deeper emotions, and it is difficult to envisage Forst ending any film on the stark notes of Ophüls' *Liebelei* or *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. 'You're not handsome but you're bold/So gallant and never cold/You're no hero, just a man, women love,' runs the refrain in *Bel-Ami*. Such was the style of this quizzical, civilised film-maker.

In an era specialising in cinematic whipped cream, anything smacking of satire took a minor place. An exception is the work of Reinhold Schünzel, whose long career took in acting (including Tiger Brown in Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper*), direction in the 1930s, then emigration to America where he again directed and acted (in *Hangmen Also Die* and *Notorious*). Schünzel's most celebrated German production, *Amphitryon* (1935), is an updated version of the story with sung dialogue, rhyming couplets and many topical allusions. (No traceable connection, incidentally, with the similar Giraudoux play.) Seen today, it seems rather repetitive and overplayed, although there are splendid inventions like the moment when Jupiter descends from the heavens in a fancy parachute—which some commentators have chosen to see as a parody of Hitler's aeroplane descent from *Triumph of the Will*.

Less ambitious and more successful is *Die Englische Heirat* (*The English Marriage*, 1934), which represents the apex of the German infatuation with things English: an outrageously parodied aristocratic family living in a vast baronial hall is outraged when one of its members secretly marries a German driving instructor (Renate Müller). Schünzel brings a whiff of Lubitsch and Mamoulian to scenes of family confusion, and there is a splendid parody of 1930s light music, starting with a Dietrich-type song in a cabaret which passes through radio microphones and is finally taken up by the camera in a slow, romantic dance in the mansion. Towering over everyone and playing it absolutely straight is the great character actress Adele Sandrock, bellowing 'Per-see-val' to her hapless relative with all the force of Edith Evans' Lady Bracknell.

During this period, the Germans seem consciously to have turned their backs on the shadowy, morbid obsessions of their cinema of the previous decade; yet past influences break through in films like *Gold* and *Die ewige Maske* (*The Eternal Mask*).

Karl Hartl, who specialised in musical biographies and soggy historical reconstructions, also had a flair for science fiction; and *Gold* (1934) is the kind of subject which might have attracted Lang if he had stayed behind—an adventure story in the serial tradition with some political overtones.

The film's huge set containing the machine which turns lead into gold looks as if it might have come out of *Metropolis* (in fact, the cameraman and designer, Günther Rittau and Otto Hunte, had both worked with Lang); and the workers, caught up in the monetary crisis and the evil machinations of their dark-coated British boss, are again seen as pawns in a power game. Whether craning round the machine as the new engineer (Hans Albers) inspects it, or watching the mechanism flashing and bubbling in the best James Whale tradition, Hartl's camera creates a series of unnerving images, not least in the eventual holocaust featuring a last-minute crisis over a closing door and a final flurry of explosions and cascading water. (Later purloined, incidentally, in the American SF film *The Magnetic Monster*.) All this is supposedly set in Scotland, in a splendidly upholstered mansion presided over by the rat-like British villain—whose final ranting outburst is shot from below in the manner favoured at the time for newsreel coverage of Germany's leaders.

Werner Hochbaum, who died in 1946, was one of those shadowy 1930s figures who made about a dozen films in a variety of genres, yet failed at the time to gain any real recognition. *Die ewige Maske* (an Austrian/Swiss production of 1935) is a well-documented, novelettish hospital drama about a doctor who goes temporarily insane on believing that his secret serum has killed a patient. Its main interest today lies in its direct visual link with the Expressionist 1920s, for much of the narrative consists of dream sequences in which the distraught hero imagines himself in a world of unending corridors reflected in distorting prisms and flashing lights—an ingenious technical feat which might have come out better in a different context.

Hochbaum's gliding camera is put to better use in a later German film, *The Favourite of the Empress* (1936). From the long opening shot, tracking backwards through a church and into a crowded fair-ground, and a later scene in the Empress of Russia's boudoir involving a secret corridor, it is evident that we are in Sternberg territory. Having paid his homage, however, Hochbaum carefully moulds the material into his own style, mixing rich decoration and lighting (the murky officers' quarters contrasted with the glitter and powder of the Imperial court) with sardonic romantic comedy in the timeless traditions of Ruritania. He is, of course, aided immeasurably by his players: Olga Tschechowa's cool yet vulnerable Empress, and Adele Sandrock's confidante, the oldest lady-in-waiting in all the Russias, sniffing out intrigues like a gaunt bloodhound.

The only other Hochbaum film I have seen, *A Girl Goes on Shore* (1938), about a sea captain's daughter trying to make a new life on land, is plausibly atmospheric but lacks point and vitality. We shall have to wait until more of his films are uncovered before making any real assessment of his

aims and his seemingly eclectic style.

Most of the directors mentioned so far had begun their careers in the 1920s. Douglas Sirk (or Detlef Sierck as he then was) began as a scriptwriter and actor in the early 1930s and, from 1935, made eight German films before leaving for America in 1939. Unfortunately, the National Film Theatre's Sirk season came too late for this article; and at the time of writing I have seen only one of the German films, *Zu neuen Ufern* (*To New Shores*, 1937). Sufficient, however, to indicate that Sirk was from the outset a shrewd technician who understood how to exploit to the full the resources of the German studios. He must have been a Golden Boy at the time. He was given Zarah Leander, the popular Swedish-born singer with the gravelly voice, as star for two pictures; and her portrayal of Gloria Vane, toast of the English 1890s, who sacrifices herself for her lover and is anachronistically despatched to an Australian penal colony, seemed to mark the possible beginning of a collaboration on Dietrich/Sternberg lines.

As in his later American films, Sirk plays the story for all it's worth, alternating dramatic set-pieces like the parade of marriageable women in the prison with frankly absurd moments when Miss Leander bursts into song about her sorry state. Most significantly, Sirk continually cuts away from the heavy 'dramaturgy' of much contemporary German scriptwriting, telling the story through a camera which always reveals and never merely records. Beginning in a period when melodramatic *kitsch* was a highly desirable product, Sirk distilled the material he found into a style which, though superficially resembling many of his contemporaries, indicates a decidedly superior taste and awareness.

No survey of the German 1930s would be complete without a reference to Veit Harlan, the director who became the 'official' spokesman of the Nazi cinema and gained everlasting notoriety for the anti-semitic *Jud Süß* (1940), that foolish saga tracing the corruption of the Court by influential Jews in 18th-century Württemberg. Haranguing dialogue and bloated over-acting from almost everyone (and from Werner Krauss, as Levi the secretary, in particular) breaks down any feeling of truth, and it seems incredible that even an indoctrinated audience could have found the sight of so many fat German actors raving at each other for nearly two hours acceptable on any level.

Equally disturbing is the suspicion that behind it all lurks a serviceable talent; and Harlan's other films confirm that he was a curiously ambivalent figure, alternating utter banalities with an assured narrative and decorative sense. An adaptation of Südermann's *Die Reise nach Tilsit* (1939)—the same story on which Murnau based *Sunrise*—is heavily dialogue-bound for most of the way. Then, as the journey of the young couple into the city begins, the imagery becomes stronger, with Harlan making fine use of the sandy seashore on which the supposedly drowned girl comes to land. The 'other' woman rushes headlong down the slope; a horse languidly nuzzles the girl's body; bells clang their warning to the searchers. With the exception of one or two shots in the fair scene, Harlan wisely avoids

copying Murnau's set-ups; nor does he add anything to Murnau's original conception.

For me, Harlan's best film from this period is *Verwehte Spuren* (*Like Sand in the Wind*, 1938), which he scripted with Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang's ex-wife and collaborator, and based on the famous story of a daughter's search for her missing mother during the Paris Exposition—a British version was filmed in 1950 as *So Long at the Fair*. In the British film, the secret of the disappearing woman is held back to the end; in the German version, we learn the truth near the beginning and then watch the daughter's slowly mounting hysteria as she finds herself at the centre of a smothering conspiracy of silence. As in Harlan's other work featuring a similarly tortured heroine (invariably played by his wife, Kristina Söderbaum), script and direction take an almost sado-masochistic pleasure in watching her tribulations. Here there is an additional irony at the end: having won through and discovered the truth about her mother's death from typhus, the girl feels a moral obligation to join with the authorities in hushing up the affair.

Harlan is particularly skilful in making the decor part of the narrative. The Paris settings by Hermann Warm (camerawork by Bruno Mondy) are, in a word, stupendous: beginning with a great parade of floats heralding the opening of the Exposition, with a huge balloon of the universe being passed over the heads of the crowd ('Look, the world is falling'), the intoxication and indifference of the swirling visitors surrounding and stifling the girl are constantly pointed up in the decor. Gaily decorated, sun-filled streets are contrasted with the hastily refurbished tourist hotels and later with the glamour of a fashionable ball, caught in a long suspended crane shot and capped with a flurry of fast trackings as the girl hysterically attacks a woman wearing her mother's jewels.

As the 1940s progressed, Harlan went on to lumbering propaganda spectacles like *Der grosse König* and *Kolberg*, which take him outside the territory covered in this short survey. The 1930s style was beginning to evaporate in the face of increased government pressures and the onrush of war themes. The young Käutner made a charming de Maupassant adaptation, *Romanze in Moll*, and in 1942 Willi Forst managed to produce yet another operetta, *Wiener Blut*, which by that time must have seemed a gross anachronism, as was Hans Bertram's *Symphony of a Life* in the same year. Made almost without dialogue, it ingeniously integrates a specially composed four-movement symphony with tragic events of the composer's life. Despite some banalities, it has an openly humanistic viewpoint, some remarkable bravura camerawork and long takes, and was the last performance of the Jewish Harry Baur, who was arrested soon after its completion and died without seeing the film. By now the favourite celluloid dreams were fading into memory: all those girls tapping their way across palatial stages, coquettish ladies exchanging admirers in the middle of a waltz, heady nights at the courts of Napoleon and Catherine of Russia. Outside, the real world *had* fallen, and the German cinema, like the nation itself, was setting out on the dark road to 1945. ■

Film REVIEWS



'Ten Days' Wonder': Anthony Perkins, Marlène Jobert, Michel Piccoli

Ten Days' Wonder

In their novel *Ten Days' Wonder*, the cousins who write as Ellery Queen produced what they described as a 'Decalogical Detective Story'. In it, their detective hero—also called Ellery Queen—is visited by a young sculptor who, since his adoptive father's marriage, has been suffering regularly from attacks of amnesia. Queen agrees to watch over the young man on his 'father's' estate, happy to work on his latest novel while the sculptor chisels away at his statues of the classical gods. In the seven days which follow, during which the 'son' is told the name of his 'real' parents and violates their tomb in an amnesiac trance, Queen learns that the boy is being blackmailed over an indiscreet and fully reciprocated passion for his young stepmother. In a moment of inspiration he perceives that the sculptor is subconsciously violating all ten commandments in turn, but reaches this conclusion too late to prevent the stepmother's brutal murder. His explanation convinces the sculptor of his guilt and prompts him to hang himself. Only a year later does Queen realise that the 'clues' which led to his deductions were all masterminded by the vengeful father, the wife's real murderer, whom he now compels to take his own life.

In transposing the novel to the screen and the action from New England to Alsace, Chabrol has changed considerably more than the characters' names. It has become axiomatic that the thriller element in his films generally serves as a formal structure within which to explore the vagaries of the human heart. Yet this time, on one level at least, he abandons Hitchcock's preference for suspense over surprise, trailing

considerably more red herrings than the original novel before his disconcerted audience, while imposing on its human relationships a wilfully classical formalism. But where the Decalogue provided the Cousins Queen with little more than the basis for a not-so-intellectual puzzle, Chabrol spins it into the moral fabric of his *Ten Days' Wonder* (Hemdale), interweaving classical mythology, Old and New Testaments, Nietzschean speculation (and, of course, a wealth of cinematic cross-references) to produce what must surely rank as the screen's first theological thriller: a brilliant, and palpably physical, exegesis on comparative religion and original sin.

To begin with, he has made two crucial changes to the novel's plot. The detective has been promoted to a philosophy lecturer, Paul (Michel Piccoli), the author of a tome called *Absolute Justice*, who uses his enforced country retreat to complete a paper on inductive reasoning. A convinced atheist and rationalist, he was formerly the son Charles' professor, personally responsible for the boy's defection from the Catholic Church. Having, as he puts it, 'taken Charles' God away from him', his attitude towards Charles' literal adoration of his father is naturally a little ambivalent.

Secondly, Chabrol has imposed on the father an eccentricity which at first sight appears merely a film-maker's baroque indulgence. A man of limitless wealth, Théo has chosen not just the place but the time in which he lives out his days: the autumn of 1925 when, as a poor man, he arrived in America and began to build his empire. Add to the etymological significance of his name the fact that he has 'created' his son from a foundling left in the dust and fashioned his wife—originally his adopted daughter—in

the mould of his private dream, and one realises that Genesis provides a more likely key than Exodus to the ensuing mysteries.

The seemingly abstract post-credits montage, involving a good deal of stop-motion, in fact follows the Bible's first chapter up to the creation of the beasts of the field. At the end of the film's third day (the narrative is divided into ten neatly labelled chapters) Chabrol, like the Lord Himself, interposes a mysterious shot of a white moon shining from the firmament over the waters. While the adulterous tryst between Charles and his stepmother Hélène (Marlène Jobert) is twice recalled in an identical shot of the pair lying in almost chaste nakedness amid a vast expanse of verdant foliage. In the context of Théo's formal Eden, it is their nakedness rather than their sin which shocks us; and from the time we see the shot, it seems inevitable that Théo must cast them relentlessly from his fragile paradise.

But with Théo as God and Charles as his son, it is perhaps no less inevitable that Christian symbolism should also be invoked. The film's first day opens with a shot of Charles' hands, patterned with his own blood; the blackmailer marks the pay-off spot with twigs in the form of a cross; and the sculptor now dies impaled, in crucifixion pose and with spikes through his hands, on the family railings.

Yet even as Théo's mad mother, locked in the attic and seldom mentioned, swigs vintage Blood of Christ, Chabrol also contrives to invoke earlier mythologies: conjuring up the thunder, she is Cybele herself, mother of the Zeus whom Charles in his studio fashions in Théo's image. The legend of Oedipus is also doubly suggested: literally, through the situation of the founding son who sleeps with his mother; and on the Freudian level, through Charles' tangled feelings for all five of his surrogate parents (Hélène, Théo, Paul himself, the farmer couple to whom Théo demonically ascribes his birth).

The film sustains and transcends this clutter of cultural cross-references largely because of the tension between its dense mythological content and its immaculate 'Hitchcockian' surface. There's a marvellous shot of Hélène racing across the town for her tryst with the mysterious blackmailer, a superb chase sequence involving two vintage cars on a pitch black country lane. Like Hitchcock, Chabrol also exploits his actors' accumulated histories to flesh out the reality of their archetypal roles. Orson Welles' monumental Théo ('You don't think a man of my size and weight wants to squat on the grass nibbling sandwiches?') fuses Kane's megalomania with the desire to turn myth to reality that destroyed the old man in *Immortal Story*. And after *Psycho*, who could help suspecting Anthony Perkins' Charles of every passing parricide?

For as in Hitchcock, Chabrol's in-jokes are often playfully misleading, providing, in fact, the major element of suspense. It is Welles' voice which introduces the narrative—as red a herring as the voice-over in *Sunset Boulevard*. The first day, through a series of crazily tilted shots and dizzying camera movements, implies that we shall be experiencing the ten days from Charles' point of view. Yet it is Paul's chain of false reasoning that we are compelled to follow thereafter.

But even when cheating, Chabrol plays fair by his own rules. As he told Rui Nogueira in a SIGHT AND SOUND interview: 'There's not only a Hélène in my films. There's always a Paul and a Charles as well... and Charles will never kill Paul.' This time Paul acknowledges his hubris, telling Théo, 'I'm as guilty as you are.' But when with his next breath he decrees, 'There's no place in this world for gods like you,' we understand that this time the transference of guilt is twofold. By ordering the death of God, the atheist has assumed His role.

Admittedly the film has some rough surfaces:



'Deliverance': Ronny Cox. 'Duet with a retarded country child . . .'

poor post-synching on the (original) English language version, dialogue spoken in a disconcerting assortment of accents. But these same imperfections serve on many levels to reinforce the film's multi-level themes. The *trompe-l'oeil* effect of the opening shots, with Rabier's camera pulling diagonally back to reveal that what we have taken for the 'reality' of Charles in his hotel room is merely a looking-glass reflection, forms the first link in a chain whose every part proves to be not what it seems. As Paul steps off the Paris train, it is through his eyes that we first see Hélène: a Twenties heroine standing erect beside her Hispano. 'I didn't know Charles had a sister,' remarks the expert in inductive reasoning. 'I'm his mother,' she declares. But image, reasoning and statement are all three equally false. The sustained *trompe-l'oeil* effects are in fact constantly paralleled by what can only be described as *trompe-l'oreille* explanations (like the mythical genealogies), reinforced by the foreign formality with which most of the principals inflect their lines.

It is only fitting that Chabrol's God should provide the final judgment. In the film's (deliberately) most spellbinding moment, Théo holds his dinner guests enthralled with an apocryphal anecdote about a man who successfully devised a potion to remove a blemish from the body of his otherwise perfect wife. Shortly afterwards, the lady died. As the *raconteur* explains, 'The imperfection was life.'

JAN DAWSON

Deliverance

There is every reason to expect that *Deliverance* (Columbia-Warner) won't work, and for a while one can't be sure that it does. Granted that John Boorman proved himself a notable expatriate with *Point Blank*, for a Londoner to venture into Li'l Abner territory seems about as likely to satisfy as Hawks tackling *On the Buses*. The film begins like the latest environmental study: bulldozers level the countryside and pollute the soundtrack, while voices speak with urgent nostalgia of forests and rivers bound for extinction as yet another dam project is completed. The speakers turn out to be four American businessmen, all whooping juvenile enthusiasm and inelegant middle age, planning a last canoe trip through wild Appalachian mountain country before it's transformed into

an artificial lake. Taken from a best-seller, the notion is heavy with familiarities—the irresponsibility of men on the loose (*Bachelor Party*), the erosion of the frontier spirit (*Lonely Are the Brave*), the helplessness of the individual at a time when private enterprise and social indifference have run wild (*Grapes of Wrath*). The businessmen, too, have travelled this road before, and one can almost see the labels: Our Hero (straight but susceptible), The Strong Man (aggressive but dependable), The Fat Man (lovable but pathetic), and The Artist (sensitive but expendable). Why do they venture with so little experience upon a torrent running so dangerously high? 'Because it's there,' asserts their leader, and one prepares to wince.

But although *Deliverance* walks a precarious tightrope, it manages not to overbalance. This is partly because, like *Point Blank*, it goes at a punishing speed, each scene springing fully armed from the teeth of the plot with a terrifying logic. Blandly insulting every backwoodsman in sight, the armchair adventurers plunge off down river, swaddled like astronauts in their inflated life-jackets, and talk exultantly of the open-air life. They are both unprepared and incredulous when the backwoodsmen catch up with them, intent on returning the insult, and prepare to put the open-air life into perspective by stripping them of clothes and dignity.

The struggle that follows is one of cumulative horror, one corpse leading to another in a desperate feud among the rapids and waterfalls of the cliff-edged river, until what remains of the expedition crawls ashore at last with a weakly trumped up cover story that deceives nobody. It's headlong action, startling, brutal and exciting; and if it did nothing more it establishes Boorman—in case we'd forgotten after the gentler moods of *Leo the Last*—as one of the most energetic directors in the business.

Burning away with controlled fury, *Deliverance* manages at the same time to be both predictable and unexpected. A broken guitar drifts by just as one knew it would have to, but the shot is from a curious angle and it lasts only long enough to establish, not to underscore. A body is discovered long after it should have been, snagged on a branch in the water, one arm so impossibly framed around its head that it seems like an apparition which ought to vanish if one could only look elsewhere on the screen. The film is in fact very much concerned with images that refuse to sink out of sight but

remain horrifyingly in our view until there is no option but to accept their existence.

In the scene of the first killing, the corpse is slumped on a branch, perched almost upright in the midst of the long argument that takes place about what's to be done with it. Boorman allows us hardly one cutaway shot from the vacantly staring face and the shaft that has transfixed its chest. When somebody says, much as we knew would have to be said, 'This will be with us for the rest of our lives,' it's only too apparent that he's right. More subtly, *Deliverance* demonstrates that living people, too, are inescapable, both in its revenge theme and in the superb opening and closing scenes which establish the unity of the country folk against the men from the city. The creatures that inhabit the forest community, degenerate, malformed, retarded though they may be, turn out to have names, friends, relatives well known to the Sheriff and his men. That harm should come to any one of them is, unimaginably, a matter for anger and concern.

Anger and concern—the emotions run like an electric current through Boorman's work, in which one character after another has been goaded into sheer physical effort because nothing else will accomplish the justice, the balance, that he recognises as a necessity. 'Sooner or later, machines are gonna fail,' says the expedition leader in *Deliverance*, 'and when they do the important thing will be to survive.' Like the car that is knocked to pieces around its owner in *Point Blank*, the Robinson Crusoe primitivism of the island in *Hell in the Pacific*, the near derelict street in *Leo the Last*, the machines in *Deliverance* have already failed their creators, moving on to leave behind a garbage world in which human alliance is the only strength. (They're not the only things on the move; the expedition survivors come ashore beside a tiny chapel at the water's edge, and later stare in amazement as the same chapel moves serenely past them in the traffic.) And although the characters in *Deliverance* to some extent learn their lesson by jointly pitting their story against the suspicions of the country people, the film's conclusion reverts to the bleakness of *Hell in the Pacific* (an irrevocable parting of the ways) rather than to the modest optimism of *Leo the Last*.

On its allegorical level, *Deliverance* is not unlike that far less illustrious horror film, *Frogs*, in which the natural life of the forest, mutated by the endless flow of human wastes and poisons, finally loses its patience and cuts mankind down to size. Yet Boorman's film is vastly strengthened by its ambiguities: the flooding of the Chattooga valley can be interpreted as a cleansing operation as much as a pollutive one, forcing the illiterate, physically deteriorating backwoodsmen out into a healthier environment. The film's marvellous early sequence in which one of the city men plays an unexpected duet with a retarded country child sets up all these resonances: their music, their intelligence, their society shares a common background. All that's needed, once the smoke has cleared, is to remember it once again—just as Leo discovered. The duet haunts the superbly compiled soundtrack for the rest of the film; and so, in a sense, does the final image of the child banjoist, poised halfway across a bridge, silent yet crying out for rescue.

When the fighting stops, Boorman suggests, you still have to talk to people—so why fight in the first place? The answer, another paradox, is that it's quite a spectacular activity, and *Deliverance* (immaculately shot by Vilmos Zsigmond) gives it full measure. All the Saturday matinée thrills are there—the villain with the shotgun, the frantic descent of the rapids, the moonlight scaling of an impossible cliff (with some surrealistic colour distortions to add to the nightmare), and even that never-failing moment of suspense when shots have been exchanged but it's a while before the dead man

falls. Boorman's cast survives it all handsomely, with excellent performances from everybody except, perhaps, Burt Reynolds, whose Superman impersonation is nevertheless neatly undercut when his survival prospects are suddenly rendered as improbable as everybody else's. Like the film's other symbols, he turns out to be not quite the symbol he first seemed; and *Deliverance* as a whole, rich, meaty and unsettling, is built on very much the same lines.

PHILIP STRICK

Roma and The Clowns

Fellini is surely the most autobiographical of film-makers. He admits to it himself, even of films which seem far removed in their apparent subject-matter from his own experience ('*Encolpius* is me,' he says of *Satyricon*). Already in *8½* he was drawing unmistakably on his own life for his materials, even though the character of Guido, the film-maker at the end of his tether, was in certain respects far enough removed from his creator to leave an area of doubt about how far identification could be pushed. More recently, though, he has come right out into the open, with a series of films which create in effect a new genre: the Fellinian essay film.

He began it in *Fellini: A Director's Notebook*, and has continued with *The Clowns* (Curzon) and *Roma* (United Artists). In the series there has been a gradual evolution of external organisation. *A Director's Notebook* was quite simply made for television, and has only been shown there; *The Clowns* was financed, like many of the most interesting recent Italian features, by RAI, but clearly conceived with about half of one eye on the first television showing; *Roma*, using the same discursive, rambling form of direct address, has been a cinema film from the start. All three have in common an unashamedly first-person approach, the same apparent fragmentariness, as of an artist chatting about ideas for works abandoned or as yet unmade, picking up a sketchbook for a moment to show what he means, rummaging through papers for a few old photographs, just talking personally, at random, completely at his ease.

The impression is, needless to say, very carefully and consciously created. For all its casual air, *The Clowns* is shaped with great precision and deliberation. It is a reflection on clowns in themselves, and clowns as a part of Fellini's world. It starts, like *Roma*, with some autobiographical episodes showing how the film's ostensible subject crept into Fellini's consciousness and became part of his mental furniture, getting subtly reshaped and recoloured in the process. The first apprehension is in childhood, in a farm like that in *8½*, where the boy Fellini wakes to find a circus springing up overnight, like mushrooms, right outside his bedroom window. Allied with this contact with an actual circus in his mind is a broader interest in the circus of life in a provincial town, the physical and mental oddities, the living grotesques who were already more than halfway towards the circus's transmutation of them behind the fantastic make-up of the clown.

The second section brings Fellini himself unashamedly in front of the camera. Though even here it is not quite Fellini himself, and this is not quite a documentary. It is Fellini fictionalised, presented as a character in a little comedy about a dotty film unit (muddle-headed scriptgirl, technician always accompanied by his mother fussing over him like a small child) trying rather lackadaisically to shoot a documentary about the survivors of the great clowning tradition, now rapidly dying off. The old clowns themselves are real enough, but even here fantasy is never far away: Anita Ekberg visiting an Italian circus to trade snarls with the big cats; Pierre Etaix trying desperately to show a very rare, if not unique film of a classic clown-

ing routine, which determinedly burns to a crisp in the projector; nicest of all, a very silly, very poignant re-creation of the Fratolinis disguised as gross butterflies trying to entertain the shell-shocked in a military hospital during the First World War.

With the third section we are back to outright fantasy: a vast and extravagant Fellini tribute to clowning in the form of a baroque apotheosis in which a comic celebration of the death and burial of a clown turns into a gaudy nightmare, becoming ever wilder and madder until at last the whole glittering, grotesque world he has summoned up dissolves into a sad little echo and a tiny gesture of farewell. Clearly the film is a kind of exorcism for Fellini—but then so are all his films, ways of dealing with his obsessions in various ways, directly and indirectly, to work them out of his system, or at least bring them down to everyday proportions. But somehow in doing this he manages to avoid being merely self-indulgent—by making his films most completely to please himself, he attains a degree of concentration and conviction which allows them to speak as clearly and independently as possible to others. He separates himself, as all artists finally must, from the work of art mainly by enshrining a part of himself in each; a skin which is sloughed off as he moves on to something new.

Roma is certainly made entirely to please Fellini; it is an obvious development of the style and structure of *The Clowns*; it is also something completely new. It is no more a documentary about Rome than *The Clowns* is a documentary about clowns. When critics brought up on neo-realism complained that for *La Dolce Vita* Fellini had the Via Veneto constructed in a studio instead of shooting on the spot, he reasonably replied that the action of the film took place in the theatre of his imagination, and was situated somewhere which for convenience sake he called Rome, but was actually a purely imaginary town which happened to borrow a few features from the town he knew best. He could say the same about *Roma*, practically all of which is shot on studio sets, even the approach to Rome along a congested freeway, which apparently necessitated laying nearly two and a half miles of road in Cinecittà. For the film is really about Fellini and Rome, with Rome in second place—it is about how Rome, actuality and idea, has impinged on Fellini's imagination (and, one might add, how Fellini has impinged on Rome).

Again Fellini himself appears in some sequences, as a film-maker making or planning to make a film. He is also represented at earlier stages in his life by a boy and a young man. Again he starts with childhood recollections, of what Rome first meant to him, as a distant, half-fantastic entity spoken of by teachers, pictured and written about. From then on, his fancy roams between present and past, reality (of a sort) and fantasy. The film is built round a number of splendid set-pieces. One of the longest is an evening in a music-hall early in the war, with an amateur talent contest of superb tattiness going on during a lot of interplay between stage and audience—all of this arising out of the young Fellini's first arrival in Rome to live in a chaotic boarding-house full of theatricals. Another spectacular reminiscence is the elaborate sequence juxtaposing experiences in two brothels, one a cheap place besieged by the soldiery, the other a luxurious establishment where the clientele is more gentlemanly and the girls more decorously exotic.

Interspersed are the present-day sequences which at first glance look most like documentary. But of course they are nothing of the sort. The entry of the film unit into Rome along the freeway is no less staged and contrived than the music-hall or the brothel. The exploration of the unending excavations for the eventual Rome underground brings in bigger and stranger machines than the real excavators ever thought of; and leads to a flight of pure fantasy when the workmen break into an elaborately painted, long-forgotten Roman villa, only to see the frescos fade and crumble before their eyes. And the visionary finale, with dozens of motorcyclists invading the night streets of Rome like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, manages to make the actual locations look like the wildest flight of some baroque theatre artist's imagination.

Then there is outright fantasy, present conspicuously in the most famous sequence of the film, the ecclesiastical fashion show. This is one of Fellini's most dazzling pieces of construction. It begins like a bit of camp nonsense, with roller-skating priests and skittish skipping nuns in fancy dress. Then little by little the mood changes to something rather sinister and menacing, until we are carried well beyond humour into a sharp critique of those elements in the Church who hanker for the past of Pius XII, whose resurrection and transfiguration are ecstatically received by the assembled grantees.

'The Clowns': '... the Fratolinis disguised as gross butterflies'



All these elements are woven together with a confidence and mastery Fellini has seldom equalled. *The Clowns* has the charm of a sketch, making its serious points indirectly and only when we stop to consider it proving to be rigorously constructed, so that every apparently random joke or distraction leads us back into the main line of argument, and nothing is finally irrelevant. *Roma* builds an altogether grander structure on a similar base. At a glance it seems freer even, more loosely organised than *The Clowns*, following nothing more rigid than a line of free association in Fellini's mind. But of course this is Fellini's art busy concealing itself. For all that it is even less apparent than in *The Clowns*, the structure is there, the knowing alternation of fast and slow sections, the changes of pace and mood which keep us completely in the film-maker's hands, even when we might rather not be. Like the Ancient Mariner, Fellini speaks to us directly, and holds us by his glittering eye. Seldom has he had his will more completely than in these two films.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Junior Bonner

'Steve McQueen, going down his own road, tougher than ever, as Junior Bonner.' For once, a publicity caption comes close to defining a film. In Peckinpah's *Junior Bonner* (Cinerama), as in his *Straw Dogs*, the central character moves alone through a world of corrupting, unstable values, strengthened but isolated by his own moral certainty. Few films have been more comprehensively misunderstood than *Straw Dogs*. Its climax was neither a hymn to the use of violence in the defence of property, nor a statement to the effect that the most rational of us are reduced in extremis to animals. It provided rather the acid test of the hero's moral strength, his integrity equated alike with the inviolability of his home and his loyalty to his helpless protégé. Like *Straw Dogs*, *Junior Bonner* ends with its hero turning his back on what was once 'home' and driving on laconically into the night. Dispossession is a key element in tragedy, and if Peckinpah's protagonists have any claim to the status of tragic heroes, it is in their readiness to forswear the stability not only of material goods (the house in *Straw Dogs*, the prize money in *Junior Bonner*) but of human relationships (the wife in the first film, the family here) in the interests of preserving their own moral stability.

Junior Bonner is a film about different kinds of movement, and different kinds of stability. Its hero, returning to his home town (Prescott, Arizona) to compete in the annual Frontier Days rodeo show, is a man who lives from motel to motel, with an income scraped from rodeo prize money or casual loans. Yet Peckinpah is at pains to present his life style as one that is essentially 'whole' and uncompromising. Not only does winning or losing make no very significant difference to him, but the experience of his work seems woven into his whole life, making of it a continuous present. A virtuoso split-screen sequence behind the credit titles dovetails black-and-white shots of the hectic ride Junior has just finished with a colour sequence of him changing back into his everyday clothes and setting off for the next rodeo at Prescott. Similarly, as Junior waits for the ring gates to open for his climactic bull ride, eye-blink flashbacks of past rides are cross-cut with the present scene.

If on one level—the death of the individualist in a standardised society—*Junior Bonner* offers yet another portrait of the passing of the West, Peckinpah steers characteristically clear of sentiment or nostalgia. Junior is a man simply but singlemindedly pursuing his trade, and though that trade carries echoes of debased idealism (horse-breaking transformed from function to exhibition piece), it still offers scope

for authentic skill and pride in achievement. Peckinpah's rodeo sequences concentrate on the preparatory rituals of the riders—the cautious mounting of the animal, the fastening of the rein, the sudden unbolting of the gates—while the rides themselves are presented in a bizarrely effective combination of slow-motion shots and brisk banjo music, conveying the exact quality of an experience in which action is accelerated but time itself somehow suspended.

Indeed throughout the film, Peckinpah's superlative contrasts of tempo highlight the fact that Junior himself builds his days and weeks around a pinpoint of time. 'I'm making my first million,' cracks his brother in one scene, 'and you're still working on eight seconds.' Like Monte Hellman (one of the few directors of whom he has been heard to speak warmly), Peckinpah creates a deliberate contrast between the rhythm of life lived at its reflective, everyday pace and the sudden moments of claustrophobic singlemindedness (the artist's or the hero's) that punctuate its surface: those eight seconds that Junior lives for.

The other members of Junior's family, though geographically and financially more stable, are shown to have none of his inner security. His mother runs an antique business and lives resignedly on her memories of a happier past, while younger brother Curly is making a fortune from real estate, buying his father's land on the cheap and re-selling it in small plots for 'mobile homes'. Only Junior's father Ace, an ageing rodeo star, shares his elder son's values. The film's structure indeed elevates Ace to joint protagonist, the early scenes cross-cutting his story with Junior's and significantly delaying their meeting until the carnival midway in the film. It is in these early parts that we watch both men taking their distinct stands against 'selling out'. Junior, after the unforgettable scene in which he watches the bulldozers, with mute and frightening violence, destroying his old home, refuses job offers from Curly and from a rodeo impresario, while Ace indignantly rejects a loan from Curly to finance his impending trip to Australia.

Once reunited, father and son promptly turn their backs on the carnival and take off to the edge of town, Peckinpah's camera cutting pointedly between the organised celebrations of the street parade and the unforced euphoria of the two men's horseback flight through suburbia. The ensuing scene, a forlorn conversation at a deserted railway depot, serves to define their unity but also their separation. Ace's disbelief on

'*Junior Bonner*': Ida Lupino, Robert Preston



learning that Junior cannot help finance his trip to Australia is embodied in a marvellous image of father and son isolated on either side of the track, clenching their features as a train roars noisily between them. Though Ace shares Junior's loyalty to a chosen way of life, he can see no justice in a world which fails to reward success with wealth, and is unable to believe that Junior is 'busted'.

Junior refuses to equate success with either material reward or competitive victory. 'We could've won,' complains Ace, when he and Junior just fail to win a rough-and-tumble cow-milking contest in the rodeo. 'We did, Ace,' is Junior's laconic reply. Given a beautifully understated performance from McQueen—wry, watchful, soft-spoken—Junior's inevitable role is that of loner, and throughout the film Peckinpah pushes his hero into the periphery of the action. The bar-room brawl runs its hectic course while Junior and Char-magne whisper gently in an adjoining telephone booth, and Junior's 'aloneness' is finally confirmed when he actually *does* win, riding out a triumphant eight seconds on the fiercest bull in the contest. For both the victory motives the audience might have ascribed to him—money and family pride—are instantly annulled: his mother and father have missed the rodeo for the sake of a fleeting reconciliation, and Junior calmly decides to sign away the prize money to his father, to pay for his air ticket. The race counts, not the victory, and Junior drives off quietly 'down his own road' to the next rodeo.

NIGEL ANDREWS

The Assassination of Trotsky

Rather like one of those thunderstorms that awakens the migraine and fidgets the dog but never quite breaks into articulate downpour, the new Losey film has flaws that cluster around it in an elusive but unavoidable gloom. The performances are a nagging distraction. It's difficult to take Burton, Delon, and Romy Schneider (in a thankless part) entirely seriously, while in recognising such reliable supporting players as Valentina Cortese, Jean Desailly and Claudio Brook, one is surprised more by their incongruity than their plausibility. If a moment might be selected, however, at which depressions can be forecast, it comes, inauspiciously, right at the beginning—a history of Bolshevism in a handful of snapshots, followed by the claim that *The Assassination of Trotsky* (MGM-EMI) will show only what has been proved.

Since Trotsky's death in 1940, little enough about him could be regarded as proven, and what is certain is largely incredible: that the architect of the October Revolution, the creator of the Red Army, and the intended successor to Lenin, should have wandered the globe in exile until murdered in Mexico with, of all things, an ice-pick, is a story that could have been invented by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in collaboration. To select only its bizarre final chapter for filming is to render the actions of its characters almost meaningless—and if one attempts to look at *Trotsky* as one is invited to do, as a historical reconstruction, it certainly makes very little sense.

There are, for a start, the factual inconsistencies. Why change the name of the assassin's American girl friend from Sylvia to Gita? Why disguise the identity of the Mexican painter, Siqueiros, who has repeatedly described in interviews how he led the raid on Trotsky's house in Coyoacan but was acquitted of attempted murder (over 300 bullet holes were found in walls and furniture) on the grounds that he sought only to intimidate? Why, in the necessarily vivid restaging of the murder itself, omit the fact that Trotsky broke three of the assassin's fingers? Why render the assassin's motives even more uncertain by omitting his claim that Trotsky tricked him with a plan to attack

Russia through Shanghai and Manchuria?

More importantly, it seems a wilful distortion that so little idea is given as to why this eccentric, voluble but evidently powerless figure should have been worth any assassin's time. If ever there was one, this was surely a case for flashbacks—on Trotsky's relationship with Lenin or his struggles with Stalin, on the political pressures that kept him shuttling around Europe, or the vital effect of the Spanish Civil War both on his life and on that of Ramon del Rio Mercader, once a firing-squad leader in Barcelona, later to become the assassin, Frank Jacson. It's really not enough to have Richard Burton observe occasionally, nostalgia gleaming from his pebble-lenses, such loaded scene-setters as 'You should have been with us when we stormed the Winter Palace . . .'

History, however, especially Russian history, is so amenable to adjustment that it seems unhelpful to argue for too long the accuracies or otherwise in *Trotsky*. The screenplay is Nicholas Mosley's (his book on the same subject has come under fire from historians), but this is a Losey film and it should be seen not as the change in direction for him that it superficially suggests, but as a continuation of the undercurrents that flow through all his work. When examined in terms not so much of Stalinist paranoia as of the private agonies of Mrs. Goforth in *Boom*, of the girl Cenci in *Secret Ceremony*, or even of the Maudsleys in *The Go-Between*, a rather more satisfying identity can be detected in the film. Here again is the Losey fortress (*The Prowler*, *The Damned*, *The Servant*), ringing as did the Goforth eyrie with the dictated observations of its occupant. Here again is the Losey intruder, like Bogarde, Mitchum, or the boy in *Go-Between*, his motives obscure even to himself, his only achievement a destructive act of betrayal. Here again is the Losey theme of pursuit, echoing that of *The Criminal* or of *Figures in a Landscape*, in which the hunted man's physical courage is all that remains to him as he awaits attack by almost supernatural forces.

Here too is the uneasy mingling of the vague with the specific, a web of incomplete recollections from which Pinter, convinced that nobody can be sure of anything about anybody, might have created the same crystalline tangle as he did for *Accident*. If only, one feels, Losey could have dispensed entirely with the historical pegs, the fate of Trotsky could marvelously have been, to use the Borges phrase, a symbol of something we are about to understand but never quite do—as were, for example, the elaborate deaths of Cenci and Mrs. Goforth. The moody killer, too, could have emerged more clearly as the victim's active half, a *King and Country* relationship and indeed a Borgesian one (the faces in the mirror), turning revenge finally inwards because no other direction is practicable. But the ice-pick remains embedded in the film, pinning it to matters of police record. One can only admire Losey's courage for having attempted to bridge the gulf between the real and the surreal in material that other hands would have treated as straight documentary.

Far from being concerned with what is proven, *Trotsky* turns out, with its gently looping camera, to deal in fantasies and hallucination, its atmosphere one of obscure feuds and distant political upheavals. The opening shot, studying a street demonstration from an uneasy distance, suggests immediately that Losey's policy of non-involvement, his habit of *showing* rather than *judging*, is calculated to reassure us that these are actions we need not seek to understand—that indeed they may never have been understood, by their participants least of all. Motives change, even as they lead to actions; the only certainty about Trotsky's death, no matter what he was daily expecting, is that its direct cause was Jacson, not Stalin. Yet that the same evil deity haunted both men



'The Assassination of Trotsky': Alain Delon

is made plain by Losey through the extraordinary apparition of Stalin's face floating under Jacson's boat like an obscene reflection of the assassin's own features.

As with so much of the film, it's a startling experiment that doesn't come off. A more damaging failure is the use of the bull-fight to parallel the assassination—the point is too quickly made that this is a ballet of ritual steps and gestures which are in themselves the only purpose behind the bloodshed. With an emphasis so heavy that it borders on vulgarity, the Jacson/Trotsky relationship is equated with that of the matador and the bull, even to the disgusting clumsiness of the final kill. The best one can say about its lack of subtlety is that at least it's a more interesting obsession for Jacson to have than the film's concluding suggestion that he murdered for the fame of it. In Losey's work, reasons are for preference left obscure; the weakness in *Trotsky* is that the script was evidently inclined to disagree with him.

PHILIP STRICK

Fritz the Cat

The Furry Freak Brothers, Mr. Natural, Wonder Wart Hog and Fritz the Cat have been the heroes of America's underground 'comix' for over four years. They are the hip, scatological, drug and sex-oriented successors to Popeye, Felix the Cat, Blondie and Dagwood. Across America they are read as avidly as the verbose press of the Consciousness III people. Their popularity is perhaps a tribute to the increasingly anti-verbal style of the underground and a reflection of the way the American language is being fragmented into a host of rhetorics. The comic-book is potentially an alternative to the manifesto and inevitably much funnier.

The ancestors of the comix are Lenny Bruce, *Playboy's* Annie Fanny and the most neglected of all subversive magazines, the *Realist*, which ten years ago was carrying brilliant, pornographic parodies of Disney characters featuring such jarring events as Snow White being had by all seven dwarfs. Sooner or later a film-maker was going to turn such comix into animated cartoons. Producer Steve Krantz and director Ralph Bakshi have been even more ambitious and made Fritz the Cat the hero of an 80-minute, fully animated cartoon which incorporates much

of the rawness, social satire and wit of Robert Crumb's original character. Crumb is the guru of the comix world and Fritz was his earliest creation. In the film, based on a handful of Crumb's strips, Fritz becomes a cross between a feline Candide and every wide-eyed, liberal drop-out who spouts the rhetoric of revolution and hipsterdom while eagerly searching for his next lay.

Fritz starts his adventures busking in Washington Square, where he persuades three dewy-eyed innocents back to his East Village crash pad for a dope-smoking session and gang-bang. His fellow animals join in, managing to provoke dialogue that would make Walt Disney turn in his grave ('Have you ever made it with an aardvark before?'). Bakshi and his team of animators, who ranged during the two years' production from seventy-five to a minimum of twenty-five, miss no opportunity to allow Fritz to encounter every American cultural archetype. The New York police are naturally played by pigs, and inevitably one is Jewish. There is a redundant chase scene in an orthodox synagogue and Fritz escapes to contemplate his future at N.Y. University. He burns his books and the University with them, heads for Harlem to get closer to black soul, and opines to a black crow, playing pool: 'My heart cries out to you in this racial crisis.' Says Duke: 'No shit!' and takes Fritz to Big Bertha, whose body has the effect of catapulting him into revolutionary consciousness. Fritz starts an apocalyptic riot in Harlem but escapes with his 'old lady', Winston (a fox). Tipping their hat to *Easy Rider*, they cross America in a VW searching for life-enhancing experiences but end up in Howard Johnson's and a confrontation with a Mansonite gang in the desert, where Bugs Bunny is portrayed as a Hell's Angel junkie. Fritz joins the gang in a plot to destroy a power station, but ends up in hospital surrounded by mourning groupies. Naturally Fritz has the survival power of any old Tom, Jerry or Felix, and in the ward he recovers to perform an action replay of his finest East Village orgy.

Fritz the Cat (Black Ink) is the first 'X' cartoon feature. The film must raise a novel question for the censor of how much animated figures can get away with compared with human characters on film. Should Warhol, for instance, remake *Trash* with rabbits and bears? In fact the animators are considerably more reticent in

their drawings than the original strips by Crumb and his fellow cartoonists like Gilbert Shelton and Spain Rodriguez. I suspect that Crumb's passive co-operation in the film project might have been more enthusiastic if the animators had made Fritz more outrageous. The screenplay bears all the marks of a Cook's Tour of the underground, taking punctilious care to include requisite four-letter words, dope scenes and political phonies. The dialogue ranges from the brilliant (the opening sequence of hard-hats in their lunch break blasting their kids) to the banal (too many of Fritz's own lines). Significantly the former was recorded vox pop on location, and the marriage of this and the Harlem scenes with the animation is outstanding.

The contrast between the longueurs in the screenplay and the technical skill and originality of the animation is highlighted by the dazzling impact of Bakshi's use of full animation. This gives the film a surreal glow, and the employment of panoramic shots of New York and Los Angeles opens up the cartoon film in a unique way. Bakshi has given the scenes in New York a vital, naturalistic quality by adapting for animation hundreds of photographs of locations in the city. The result is a Grosz-like background for Fritz's picaresque adventures.

But even this visual virtuosity cannot conceal a feeling that inside this 80-minute film there is a brilliant 20-minute film trying to get out. Still, *Fritz the Cat* has taken animation into new territories and it will provoke the loudest cartoon furor since the udders were censored off Walt Disney's cows in the Thirties. I gather that Bakshi's next project is to be a cartoon version of *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

RICHARD GILBERT

Young Winston

One of the odder things about *Young Winston* (Columbia-Warner) is how little the picture has absorbed of Churchillian panache—especially if this is defined as an ability to carry off tricky situations with style. This is on the whole a gingerly production, stepping at times as though feeling heat rising from the bricks beneath its feet. One is left wondering, after seeing the screen job Carl Foreman and Richard Attenborough have made of it, whether the legend of the Churchills need have been so confining.

Admittedly, there are problems. There are still living susceptibilities to be considered. (Of what other film set mainly in the last

century could this possibly be said?) There are some obvious, perhaps essential omissions. It would hardly be the moment to serve up a widescreen reminder of Lord Randolph Churchill's best known pronouncement, 'Ulster will fight; Ulster will be right.' It wouldn't at all fit the spirit of this production, with its excessively seraphic Lady Randolph (Anne Bancroft), to show Winston returning from the wars to confront his mother's wedding to young Mr. Cornwallis West. And there is, as central difficulty, the present state of play of the legend itself. Boys' paper heroics, with our hero riding off in all directions, are not the film's style, and about as out of fashion as they could be. On the other hand, it would go equally against the picture's grain (and its commercial prospects) to suggest that the hero's underpinnings rested at all substantially on clay. Foreman and Attenborough have looked for a middle way; the question is whether they have found it.

The driving force suggested for young Winston is the obvious one—the obvious being in this case probably right. As Carl Foreman's script sees it, the Harrow dunce was fired by an urgent passion to emulate, outdo or avenge his brilliant, erratic and ultimately tragic father. Randolph Churchill threw away his political career on a miscalculation of the odds; Winston at times came close to it. The bathetic, feebly ironic epilogue, in which the aged Winston is visited in a dream by Randolph's rueful ghost, suggests that Churchill never really believed—or affected not to believe—that his father would have found his achievements anything but a bewildering reversal of form. The Churchillian whimsicality—the mood of a much older man—is a note out of time and, in the film, extremely out of context. It hammers at the theme of father and son; but the script's problem has been that this is much easier to state than to dramatise. Lord Randolph Churchill's dramas were his own; they touched the young Winston only in so far as he was excluded from them. Robert Shaw's performance is the film's strong card, commanding its first half, and its best scenes are the simple, theatrical moments of Randolph's decline—the attempt to enlist *The Times* in support of his resignation, the breakdown in the House, as he pitifully tries to hold his speech and his wits together. Both scenes work because they are unequivocal: there are no two ways about them.

With Winston himself, things become more complex, and there's no dramatic focal point for the crowded incident of *My Early Life*. The only link between India, the Sudan, South Africa and the House of Commons is that

our hero found himself in all these places. And where too much ground is to be covered, Foreman's script falls flaccidly back on narrative. Young Winston (Simon Ward) goes through the actions, while his own voice, in a none too viable imitation of old Winston, quotes what Churchill, years afterwards, chose to remember. The character becomes progressively more detached, as though retreating into his reminiscences. Apart from his parents, his trusty nanny (who might have been spared her mawkish deathbed), army officers encountered on various expeditions, and at the end a glimpse of devious Lloyd George, waiting to lure Winston to the Liberals, this Churchill seems to be going through life curiously unaccompanied. There's a striking absence of human contact, the private life.

Perhaps it's in some recognition of this that the script flings in its reserves, and the most dubious of its devices—the moments when Winston and his parents are separately visited by an unseen interrogator, a kind of fourth estate voice from the fourth dimension, and asked a variety of impertinent, embarrassing or unflattering questions. This insinuating, carping voice speaks not for history but for the gossip column: it's a voice which discounts itself, and devalues the questions it puts. In which case, why put them?

Young Winston was not popular, as the script keeps pointing out. But because it sets out to 'explain' Churchill in terms of the thwarted relationship with his father, without really defining what there was in those days to explain, other than an unfashionable surfeit of ambition, the way is open for Richard Attenborough's rather pantomimic, catch as catch can direction. Repeatedly, one is struck by the trouble that has gone to setting up some big location—Blenheim, Sandhurst, the Sudan—in which nothing really dramatic is going to happen. Another handsome setting marches past. Snatches of pomp and circumstance parody, such as Kitchener's first entry, emerge like ill-tuned echoes from *Oh! What a Lovely War*. Against any sustained awareness of that other country of the past, there are instant recognition effects, snapshots from the end of the pier.

Perhaps a very early scene best sums up the sense that bets are being hedged all round the course. Young Winston, soldier and war correspondent, attaches himself to a North West Frontier raid on a deserted village. As the huts are set on fire, the guerrillas, who have sneakily concealed themselves, emerge to ambush the platoon. Our hero dashes back to rescue a wounded Indian trooper; and the latter, as he is being hauled to safety, yelps in ripest Peter Sellers, 'Oh, Sahib, you are hurting me!' The scene plays on three factors: obvious modern parallels (the way it is mounted suggests these were not unsought); the G. A. Henty skirmish, and the jokey touch. Layers, in this instance, not of significance but of hindsight and superficiality: whatever Churchill himself saw in that burning village, it was not this.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

'Fritz the Cat'



Slaughterhouse-Five

Not in fact the best of Kurt Vonnegut's work, despite its best-selling status, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a part of what seems like a single continuing book that Vonnegut has been writing, with asides and footnotes, since his earliest short story publications in the 1950s. Vonnegut is in a category of his own as a writer. On the one hand, living out the belief of his own invented multi-millionaire Eliot Rosewater ('Science fiction writers are the only ones who know what's going on any more'), he uses the wildest notions of speculative fantasy to construct a universe governed by doty but consistent laws often stretching into the fourth



'Slaughterhouse-Five': American prisoners in Dresden

dimension. On the other, as with his superb novel *Mother Night*, he writes thinly disguised autobiography about his wartime experiences and the suffocating post-war years in the States during which he became convinced of the authentic insanity of a system that promotes to the top those who actually care least about the planet. Peopling his stories, the same Vonnegut prototypes reappear like a stock company—among them Eliot Rosewater, Kilgore Trout, the Tralfamadorians, and the fearsome Diana Moon Glampers. There is also the Bokkonist philosophy, first expounded in *Cat's Cradle*, which has featured, with adjustments and disguises, in all Vonnegut's subsequent novels; it seeks to rationalise the irrational and to draw some small measure of reassurance from it. Vonnegut uses its bizarre doctrine both to demonstrate the futility of rationalising anything, and to underline the need for at least some reaction to unimaginable events (his 'So it goes' in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, firmly punctuating every mention of death, is an example of Bokkonism in translation).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the two Vonnegut territories—factual and fantastic—are merged into one extraordinary landscape. Billy Pilgrim, floating in bewilderment through his life as if it belonged to someone else, is present (as was Vonnegut) at the destruction of Dresden in 1945; simultaneously, he is an exhibit on the planet Tralfamadore, where he lives in a well-furnished showcase with the voluptuous actress Montana Wildhack and entertains the natives with performances of such traditional Earth rituals as eating, sleeping, and sex. The two extremes are equally incredible, of course; if one has to accept the fact of the Dresden firestorm, one might as well accept, too, the Tralfamadorians, whose view of time is that whatever happens is always unalterably happening, whether one is conscious of it or not. Through the juxtaposition of Billy's 'normal' and Tralfamadorian experiences, Vonnegut suggests that what we do is always with us, that there will always be a Second World War, that there will always be prisoners-of-war, and that Dresden will always burn.

Not so much a science-fiction novel, then, as an anti-war subject, lending itself irresistibly to celluloid where events, like Vonnegut time, re-run themselves endlessly on the same strip

of film. And not so much an ordinary production, either: *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Rank) had a budget of over three million dollars and was entrusted to George Roy Hill, fresh from the success of *Butch Cassidy*. Hill's problem was not so much the reconstruction of Dresden (he used Prague) or of the surface of Tralfamadore (he used special effects), as the visualisation of Vonnegut's humour and Bokkonism, a process of sly and elusive jabs too delicate for enactment without the risk of overstatement.

The attempt is honourable but unsuccessful—indeed, one suspects that Vonnegut is untranslatable. He deals not with real people but with moods, attitudes, situations. Billy Pilgrim's function, like a ball in a slot machine, is to trigger the lights and sounds of (Vonnegut's own) memory, illuminating at random the unchanging surface of his existence.

With all the flashbacks and flashforwards, it could have been *Marienbad*, except that the only mystery is how Billy has become 'unstuck' in time; this aside, he is always clear about which bit of his life he is reoccupying, from his frightful marriage to his public death, from the Dresden bombing to the optometrists' plane crash which he alone survives, from his college days to his capture by the Tralfamadorians.

Hill industriously edits the film to conform with this fortuitous pattern, but all he gets is a war movie in which the central character is given to rather wilder hallucinations than those endured by the pacifist in *Catch-22*. Whereas Vonnegut made all levels of Pilgrim's journey look equally crazy, Hill makes the war scenes only as surrealistic as war itself, not more so. And whereas the book gives no sign that the circle will be broken, the film falls straight into the trap of a happy and escapist conclusion that would have delighted the Tralfamadorians, with their scorn for the narrow vision of Earthmen. Billy and Montana sit contentedly in their insulated globe as though the nightmare, once past, is also past renewing.

The film does best what George Roy Hill did best with *Butch Cassidy*. The camera keeps in close-up as much as it dares, to get the most from the performances, to heighten tension, and to suggest a larger-than-life interplay of emotions. The backgrounds are painstakingly done, with the Dresden set-piece an expectedly impressive wasteland of rubble and smoke, casually

littered with desultory human figures. The Tralfamadore interior is glaringly lit, in keeping with the alien view of garish human living standards, and the special effects aren't too implausible (except for the first Tralfamadorian visit, a wobbling circle of light that suggests only incipient delirium tremens).

When given the chance for action, Hill grabs it gratefully: the dash to the hospital by Billy's wife, who tears her car spectacularly apart in the process, is given full screen measure of easy thrills. But the difficult stuff is solved by avoidance—like the Tralfamadorians, which Vonnegut describes as two feet high, green, and shaped like plumber's friends, but which Hill (and one can't altogether blame him) simply renders invisible. As Billy Pilgrim, Michael Sacks tries nobly to be all ages at once and not surprisingly is unconvincing in any of them, although remaining likeable enough. But for those who've never encountered Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* will be a mystery, and for those who have, it can only seem a charade. Where Vonnegut attempts, as he puts it, 'to reinvent the universe' in order to see if it works better in any other context, the film reinvents nothing, gives no idea how science fiction can help in the reconstruction work, and defeats the Vonnegut purpose instead of supporting it. It could all have been much more fun, and much more sense.

PHILIP STRICK

Evel Knievel

A vigorous exercise in how to take all the liberties of low budget production while not seeming to suffer too much from the constraints. *Evel Knievel* (MGM-EMI) is thoroughly organised in noticeably loose and casual fashion, playing out all the comedy of a self-declared hero who never stops pleading his perfect seriousness, putting in all the connections between a jumble of episodes but not minding if they come out a little scrambled, and slipping through the orbits of movies with a more expensive reach in a manner reminiscent of other ventures with a lively sense of play and small resources, when Corman was king of the Z features and Bogdanovich was a novice.

The biographical aspect is a small point, and is almost written off in a final note to the effect that although the film is based on the real-life Knievel, characters and events have been freely invented, and any similarity to persons alive or dead etc., etc. What seems evident long before the screen Knievel jokes about Bonnie and Clyde is that the makers are more interested in their hero as showman than in the literal facts of his growth from lone-wolf delinquent in the 1950s to patriotic superstar of the Seventies. They go even further in discarding any kind of reality/illusion split and just explore, and enjoy with dry good humour, the manufacture of an incredible personal style, an ambition that hitches grandeur to a spoof humility ('It's a great honour for me to risk my life for you here today') and sets out to prove that man's diverse desires, to push out against the impossible and to live with a sense of dignity, somehow come together in the act of jumping a motorcycle over an ever-lengthening line of cars.

The different stages of Knievel's life are plotted not so much as a development as a series of self-created roles, which George Hamilton acts out with a fine combination of ebullience, precision and parody. When Knievel decides, after announcing his presence for the first time to a startled and near-flattened Linda (Sue Lyon), that 'she didn't know what to make of me', it is more a triumphant declaration that he always knows what to make of himself. The performance of course becomes more difficult as he moves from small-time delinquent to the fabricated idol of thousands of fans, waiting for his next show at the Ontario Motor Speedway



'Evel Knievel': George Hamilton and motorbike

as the film opens and jubilantly completing it at the end. Knievel's compulsive behaviour at this stage looks like an erratic discharge of energy, as he dashes about trying to visit and touch up all the parts of his myth at once; or at least the desire, even if it means having to move in contradictory directions, not to be caught standing in any one place.

Director Marvin Chomsky abets the parody, and the impression that there are an abundance of Knievels, with the switches from the discreetly period settings in Butte, Montana, to the glossy suite at the Speedway. He also manages, despite the patchwork style of the film, to keep everything keyed to Knievel's characteristic range of emotion and response. When, for instance, the comic outburst of Knievel's kidnapping of Linda from her boarding-house is followed by a scene of wide-open desolation by an acreage of railway tracks, any gloomy undertow to the escapade is quickly dissipated by Knievel's instinctive need to dominate the mood of any situation. As he says somewhere else, 'I feel great. You have to wonder whether you feel good or bad.' Something of the same attitude explains Knievel's constant decrying of the indispensable help ('I don't need any team to back me up') he receives from his wife and regular surgeon, as he zestfully, comically sets about stitching together the personal style that will unite the challenging adventure of Columbus and the Wright Brothers with the entertainment value of Elvis and Frank Sinatra. An ambition that looks as feasible as straddling the Grand Canyon.

RICHARD COMBS

Prime Cut

Michael Ritchie's first feature, *Downhill Racer*, was compounded of dramatic halftones and fleeting ambiguities. Obviously more idiosyncratic and somehow less complete, *Prime Cut* (Fox) is still undeniable proof of Ritchie's talents and a beguiling entertainment; a grim divertissement that is constantly on the point of turning into a comedy. The treatment of people remains the same, a discreet distance and their natural reserve locking them within a landscape and a certain ritual of action, where they are gradually forced to define themselves. But here the patterns are more fluid, and the landscapes have escaped from the inflexible monotony of *Downhill Racer* and pass through changes of mood with the air of a bizarre prestidigitation.

The film's early scenes set up, with a first deceptive wave of the hand, the confrontation that promises to be the main source of action. Lee Marvin is the Chicago gangster Nick Devlin, despatched to the prairie lands of Kansas to recover a debt owed the city syndicate by their country cousins, headed by the genial 'Mary Ann' (Gene Hackman), who operates a flourishing trade in narcotics and prostitution under cover of a slaughtering and meat-packing concern. Devlin takes with him an old associate, Shay (William Morey), a chauffeur who also takes the more ambiguous role of devoted retainer and long-standing adviser, together with three younger men with whom Devlin has never worked before. The party leaves Chicago at night, driving along neon-lit highways into 'terra incognita', discussing the venture ahead as businessmen checking on a branch office in a part of the country still new to them.

The sober atmosphere of the journey, the trivial nature of the conversation, does more than avoid the usual gangster clichés. It is a way of drawing out the everyday ordinariness of these characters—the young men in particular remaining unobtrusive, interchangeable junior executives. (One of them, stopping off to say goodbye to his family, asks Devlin in to meet his mother.) But as the film's mood shifts, the continuing blandness of the group becomes slightly mysterious, just as their companionship on the journey, with its hints of family closeness within the strict limits of the business at hand, becomes positively attractive when set against the grotesque parodies of family relationships that they encounter once they have entered Mary Ann's country.

Devlin himself remains necessarily enigmatic through most of the film; but the elusiveness of his character takes on a quality slightly different from the corrupt-but-human aspect of his colleagues when, after his first inconclusive meeting with Mary Ann, he impulsively rescues one of the girls kept doped and penned in Mary Ann's stockyards. The subsequent scenes, which first begin nudging the thriller towards fairytale when Devlin undertakes a Pygmalion transformation of the girl, work without a trace of awkwardness both because of the sense that Devlin's personality is still as undefined as the girl's (only Marvin's authority keeps one believing in him as the hood he is made out to be), and because of the subtly inculcated suspicion that this part of the country is altogether another world, where the gangster is as much at risk as the foundling.

Their mutual helplessness is stressed in a later scene which has them threatened by Mary Ann's minions and an omnivorous harvester in a wheatfield. It is this scene which also makes clear a particularly outlandish presentation of the country/city opposition. The incongruous enemy that these Chicago mobsters first encounter is a uniform legion of corn-

'Prime Cut': Cissie Spacek, Lee Marvin



haired, blue-eyed young men wearing blue dungarees and toting shotguns. But as danger encroaches on business from all sides, after Mary Ann has delivered his boast that 'This is my country and I give it what it wants,' the gangsters find themselves assailed by a race of seeming pod people, a parody community that travels through *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to end up close to Swiftian satire on this country of conspicuous and continuous consumption.

That Devlin and his boys should become humanity's representatives in the face of this monster peril is an irony that is not stressed (at least until the final shoot-out), and to do so would be to take the film's ideas more seriously than it takes them itself. Most of the implications of this unnatural or denatured climate are played out, after all, in a series of grisly jokes on a world readily reduced to fodder—a gunman is digested by a sausage machine, a shiny black sedan by a harvesting machine, and rows of heads in a field of sunflowers are neatly scythed by gunfire.

One small dissatisfaction might be a lack of invention and development in the latter stages. Possibly this has something to do with *Prime Cut* not taking itself too seriously; but the film finally only doubles back to polish up previous designs. The thriller has its bloody climax, and as Devlin returns to release Poppy's sisters in bondage, everything lapses, just a little too easily, back into fairytale.

RICHARD COMBS

Festivals: Venice

from page 201

The last word for Oshima's *Dear Summer Sister*. On a single viewing, Oshima's new film seemed less multi-dimensional than most of his earlier work, less centred on the cross-currents of several individual and national preoccupations. The setting is Okinawa, where a young girl has come from Tokyo with her future stepmother to look for a boy who may be her brother. A boy responds to their search, but though the girl wants it to be otherwise she is convinced that this is not her brother. Parallel with this theme is a meditation on the uneasy relationship between Japan and Okinawa immediately after the American withdrawal from the island. At times the parallel lines cross and merge, at others they seem to diverge—a characteristically devious Oshima metaphor for the crisis of identity represented in the Japanese attitude to Okinawa and *vice versa*. Accompanying the girls is an old near-alcoholic man in search of someone to kill him in Okinawa: a ritual expiation of Japanese guilt for wartime atrocities perpetrated on the island. Then the girl's father arrives, and the themes of family relations, kinship and marriage, herald new levels of complexity. What has seemed, for Oshima at least, a relatively unconvoluted film is now enmeshed in a web of resonances, some obvious, some half-suggested. As in *The Ceremony*, these themes converge during a family gathering, in this case a beach party at which an apparently easy-going conversation carries undercurrents of personal and national unease. Oshima says he wanted to make a film about responsibility by default. *Dear Summer Sister* will need more than one viewing, but even in the distracting circumstances of a festival screening its echoes persist and disturb.

DAVID WILSON

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CINEMA OF JOSEF VON STERNBERG

THE CINEMA OF JOHN FORD

By John Baxter

TANTIVY PRESS, 90p each

'He disguised his sensitivity under an armour of feigned indifference.' Writing about Sternberg, John Baxter might be writing about John Ford. The armour, he suggests, was more than a necessary part of anyone's Hollywood survival kit; and other, perhaps unexpected similarities begin to surface if we put these two monographs together. Both directors were attracted by the *kammerspiel* manner, uninterested in 'realism' or historical accuracy and inclined to an autocratic view of society (though was Ford 'a military aristocrat' before 1940, if ever?). Above all, they both sought an ideal; hence the armour. Sternberg was in search of 'a phantom reality of his own devising . . . to build around his lover a fantasy of sexual perfection that in its impossibility of attainment could only bring him pain and despair,' while 'the essential interest' of Ford, the crypto-Papist, is 'the relationship of men to each other, and to God.'

John Baxter, in the meanwhile, pursues his own quest: to reveal the defining qualities of men often concealed by their defensive statements or the misleading nature of botched enterprises. On Sternberg he has opened up a good deal of information about the life, both private and public, and the embattled studio backgrounds; although a pleasure in anecdote often distracts him from asking the probing critical question.

In his native Australia, Baxter even dared to interview the great man: 'He answered each of my cautious questions with a stare, an evasion or a lie. Before the meal, I had liked his films; afterwards, I revered them and their maker.' Which is to say that Mr. Baxter is a fine guide to Sternbergian humour and knows when the self-abasement and haughtiness betoken genuine pain. He points out how Sternberg often stiffens plots by working in memories autobiographical (usually, of self-abasement) and cultural. Lola's dress and guise in *The Blue Angel* recall the etchings of Félicien Rops, and the pre-Godard emphasis on lettering in *Shanghai Express* warns us, he believes, to interpret its style as a form of oriental calligraphy.

Mr. Baxter asked Sternberg why

he had taken up Chinese philately as a hobby. 'I wanted,' he said in a tone that suggested we should have known, 'a subject I could not exhaust.' Yet nonplussed, Mr. Baxter himself can take on an Asian inscrutability. He chides Lee Garmes for claiming to have invented the glamour of the Dietrich legend—'If the "Dietrich face" were a matter of three lights, we could all be Sternbergs ten times over'—without throwing much light on the nature of Sternberg's powers of transformation. But I cherish some of his insights, as when he describes 'Sternberg's skill in isolating significant detail in mid-shot, while continuing to fill the frame' in his war documentary, *The Town*.

The Ford monograph is more ambitious, and less successful. Mr. Baxter has some harsh things to say of the 'horse-and-buggy' humanist critics of *Sequenze*. He would like to heal their split between Ford, the artist who conceals his art, and Ford, the self-consciously arty director, and thinks we need to appreciate more highly *The Fugitive*, *Mary of Scotland* and *How Green Was My Valley* if we are to understand the consistency of the Ford canon. 'The essence of Ford's style lies in an extremely specific and symbolic manipulation of gestures, visual situations and landscape, and his personal signature is in his rearrangement of them in relation to his characters to create meaningful contrasts between them.' A gallant argument, but too abstract for Ford's often yielding and complicated response to events.

In dismissing the humanist approach, he leaves himself ill-prepared to respond to Ford's humanity or lapses into stereotype. He discovers with a whoop an iconographic meaning in the shadows and silhouettes of *The Searchers*, and praises the moment when Chief Scar's shadow falls on a terrified child as a 'purely dramatic gesture' without recognising how this expressionist shorthand denies the meaning of the child's terror and demotes the Chief to something out of a barnstorming melodrama.

Sternberg may have applied a rigid and seigneurial morality to his characters; but Ford has often been more diffident. He is in fact interested in individuals (*pace* Mr. Baxter) and in the ways they can develop. Though influenced to the core by Griffith and Murnau, he is, at his best, free from their tendency to schematise. *Straight Shooting*,

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his first feature and a great discovery at the NFT retrospective, shows him to be among the first to spot the cinematic possibilities of the easy-going event, the unfurling of a relaxed moment, the contrast within a composition which cannot be easily explained. Ford is remarkable: in part because he can be stirred by experiences such as mourning or forgiveness which break up any doctrinaire interpretation of behaviour. In this, he differs from Sternberg. What they have deeply in common, perhaps, is a distrust of their own femininity, a distrust which has hindered their portraiture of women. Yet in spite of this distrust, Ford has not rejected his femininity. I suspect it to be the source of his warm and multi-faceted response to the heroism of ordinary people.

ERIC RHODE

TRANSCENDENTAL STYLE IN FILM: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer

By Paul Schrader

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS,

\$10.00

Modesty and caution are not exactly what one expects to find in a book with this title, on these three directors; but ironically, one of the chief limitations of this comparative study is that these qualities often seem to predominate over everything else. The first 'step' of transcendental style,

for instance, is defined as follows: 'The everyday: a meticulous representation of the dull, banal commonplaces of everyday living, or what [Amédée] Ayfre quotes Jean Bazaine as calling "le quotidien".' Not quite a double redundancy, but close enough to make one wonder why this passage and so many comparable ones suggest a critic walking on eggshells.

Although it is nowhere identified as such, Schrader's extended essay has much of the look, shape and sound of a doctoral dissertation: 194 footnotes are appended to 169 pages of text, and each step of the argument proceeds like a slow-motion exercise in which every inch of terrain must be defined and tested before it can be touched upon. For starters, the definitions of 'transcendental' and 'style' take up nearly two pages apiece.

To a certain extent, such circumspection is admirable. Schrader rightly points out in his introduction that 'transcendental' is an imprecise, much-abused term in film criticism, and the precise definition he gives it here makes the concept functional rather than loosely evocative. The central theme derives from an epigram by Gerardus van der Leeuw: 'Religion and art are parallel lines which intersect only at infinity, and meet in God.' Relating the separate styles of Ozu and Bresson to a common spiritual process, Schrader works overtime in making this assumption appear tenable.

His conclusion: that 'the family-office cycle of Ozu's later films and the prison cycle of Bresson's middle films construct a similar style to express the Transcendent'; while Dreyer's films exhibit this style only partially, in interaction with the conflicting influences of Kammerspiel and expressionism. With varying degrees of plausibility, Ozu is related to the Zen arts of painting, gardening and haiku; Bresson to Jansenist theology, Byzantine portraiture and the aesthetics of Scholasticism; Dreyer to Gothic architecture.

If the Dreyer chapter comes off best, this may be because the director is accorded an impure status (along with Rossellini, Antonioni, Michael Snow and Budd Boetticher, among others, who are segregated to passing references), and thus registers as recognisably human. Here and in a recent article on another impure subject ('Notes on *Film Noir*', *FILM COMMENT*, Spring 1972), Schrader shows himself particularly adept at charting complex relationships without diminishing the singularity of separate films.

Confronting Ozu and Bresson, he comes rather close to converting them into matching icons in a high-priced auction. ('No artist or style has cornered the transcendental market,' he remarks at one point, in an unfortunate attempt to lighten his academic prose.) Discussing each director, he relies excessively on pre-existing models provided by other critics: Donald Richie dominates the Ozu section, while the observations on Bresson are frequently nothing more than extended glosses and refinements of Ayfre, Bazin and Sontag. If his underlying thesis seems to limit the range of both directors, this may be partially due to the fact that too much of the visible work comes from the library; evidence from the screen is almost made to seem secondary.

As Schrader makes clear in his conclusion, his 'intention is not to pretend any "new" aesthetics, but rather to situate [his] concept of filmic "transcendental style" within some previous theories.' But the net effect of this synthesis is to turn Bresson and Ozu into postulates, often reducing their films to simple cause-and-effect mechanisms. In Ozu, 'a shot of snow-capped mountains inserted after a discussion by several parents plainly suggests the unity to which they aspire, but the same shot inserted after a parent-child quarrel suggests that the traditional unity may have little meaning within the post-war family structure.'

Bresson's use of techniques from Byzantine art is said to 'produce certain desired, tried-and-true audience reactions'—as if he were following mail-order recipes—and we are told that he 'shoots his scenes from one unvarying height ... at the chest level of a standing person,' a fact contradicted by at least half a dozen stills reproduced in the book. Despite such difficulties, we are persuaded that Ozu and Bresson have many stylistic

traits in common; yet by the time we've finished this heavy entertainment, we may well suspect that the differences between these master directors might be even more important.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

The Brakhage Lectures, by Stan Brakhage (*The Good Lion*, Chicago). *The Brakhage Lectures*—there are four of them, on Méliès, Griffith, Dreyer and Eisenstein—were originally delivered as a course at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1970–71, accompanied by screenings of 43 films by these and one or two other directors. In cold print, separated from the films and from the lecturer's presence, they result in a very peculiar little book. First there is the difficulty of Brakhage's style, a blend of folksy and Yellow Book aesthetic, all hyphens and word plays and parentheses: 'Carl Theodor Dreyer—blond Teutonic boy (grey mist's light) with fairest skin (rubbed from fire within) and thinnest features (taut with stance) and sharpest eyes (ice) imaginable ... ah eyes!—what shall we think of eyes like that?'

Once over the hurdle of language, you begin to get the uneasy feeling that Brakhage's notions of the directors are narrowly based on the selection of films shown during the course, his assumptions of historical chronology on the order in which the films were projected at his sessions. This way, for instance, he arrives at some very ingenious but quite unfounded assessments of Méliès' artistic progress. Of course he is not concerned with facts, but ideas. Or rather one *idée fixe*, of each of his directors as a predestined man. Thus Méliès was ever haunted by a foetal image of dismemberment; Eisenstein was fired by the baby experience of turning the pages of a picture book; Griffith by the idealised image of a sister-figure; Dreyer just by being Danish. There are appealingly eccentric side notions, like his idea of Griffith's debt to the incorrigible incompetence of Billy Bitzer. 'Old "chancy" Billy, Fate's darling—in the sense that angels always look-out-for the drunk, the fool, the child ... Billy Bitzer, with the luck of the Irish, became Griffith's main cameraman—because he had the inevitable luck of making meaningful mistakes. ...'

Of course there are insights, and flashes of inspiration, because Brakhage is, whatever else, a personality in his own right. Only they don't seem to have much to do with the men he's actually talking about.

DAVID ROBINSON

The Name Above the Title

Frank Capra's autobiography *The Name Above the Title*, which Elliott Stein reviewed in *SIGHT AND SOUND* (Summer, 1972) from the American edition, is now published in Britain by W. H. Allen, at £4.50.

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Letters

Edgar Wallace and Kong

SIR,—As an author, film collector and film historian whose work has been used by Hollywood, I was naturally interested in Merian Cooper's letter on Edgar Wallace and *King Kong* which appeared in the Spring issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, and in which he says that 'not one single scene, nor line of dialogue in *King Kong* was contributed by him.'

As an enthusiast for horror films who saw the film on its first release and who has seen it some 15 times since, I can claim to be reasonably *au fait* with the plot and general action. Moreover, my knowledge goes a little deeper than most people's. Edgar Wallace's daughter, Miss Penelope Wallace, recently sent me the complete script of *Kong*, as it was originally called. This is Edgar Wallace's own draft, with corrections and interpolations in his handwriting. It makes fascinating reading, and reduces to nonsense Mr. Cooper's assertion that 'not a single idea' of Edgar Wallace's was used in the film.

What Edgar Wallace meant in *My Hollywood Diary*, I am sure, was that the basic idea for *Kong* and the framework of the story was Cooper's; but there is no doubt in my mind, after a careful re-reading of this succinct, vivid and brilliant script, that Wallace's fertile genius for invention was responsible for a good fifty per cent of the film's success. It also reveals that had Edgar Wallace lived he might well also have become a great man of the cinema.

His complete, 110-page script opens with the unforgettable image of a monkey with a rose in its hand. The monkey is pulling away the petals of the rose.

The first snatch of dialogue deftly delineates the scene:

ENGLEHORN: You see. It is der dawn of human intelligence, is it not? The admiration of the beautiful thing.

DENHAM: Yeah! And he's pulling it to pieces—that's human.

As we know, this admirable opening was scrapped for the long prologue in New York in which Robert Armstrong's Denham meets the starving Fay Wray (surely the best screamer in the business).

Let us just examine some aspects of Edgar Wallace's script, in view of Mr. Cooper's assertions.

From page 48 onwards, Edgar Wallace spends some 12 pages of his script in describing: Kong crossing a ravine on a fallen tree with the girl in his hand; the

rescuers following; Kong placing the girl in a fork of a tree; Kong shaking all the men off the tree-bridge into the ravine; a dinosaur menacing Shirley; Kong's fight and triumph over the dinosaur; his carrying off the girl; the sole survivor of the rescuers (Bruce Cabot) following; Kong climbing the hill to the cave ledge; the scenes on the ledge, including one effective piece of 'business' in which Kong makes a 'nest' for the girl and which doesn't appear in the film; the shredding of her dress; and Kong's killing of another animal which menaces Shirley.

Significantly, almost all of these scenes appeared in the completed release print of *King Kong* in the order envisaged by Wallace, and in fact they make up the most satisfyingly Gothic central section of the film. Not one scene, Mr. Cooper?

Edgar Wallace's complete finale in New York also appeared in the picture, with minor changes (the circus, for instance, became a huge hall—Carnegie Hall?), and Wallace describes with evident relish and great skill the chaos in the city, Kong's flight to the top of the Empire State and his clawing down a plane which comes too close. Cooper and Schoedsack, of course, improved on this by having a battle between Kong and the aircraft and the huge ape finally plunging to the street, but this surely does not vitiate Wallace's great contribution to the script.

Incidentally, Wallace's circus scene, in which Kong fights lions and tigers to save the girl, was used some twenty years later almost *in toto* in a sequel to *King Kong*, *Mighty Joe Young*. Significant, perhaps.

One could go on, but I will not further weary the reader. Dialogue is difficult, I know, but much of Wallace's vivid, racy dialogue has, I am convinced, survived in the film—with changes here and there.

Might it not be that (a) Mr. Cooper's memory is at fault due to the passage of time—after all, this happened over forty years ago; and (b) might not Edgar Wallace's original contribution have been overlooked as other people worked on their own versions after his death? I am sure that Mr. Cooper is a fair-minded man also. Might not we—and the author's daughter—now learn whether or not he might have been mistaken about Edgar Wallace's—I would suggest—unique contribution to the film of *King Kong*?

Yours faithfully,

BASIL COPPER

Sevenoaks, Kent.

Capra and Eisenstein

SIR,—I just want to add something to Capra's version of Eisenstein (*Capra Counts his Oscars*, SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1972). Eisenstein was also a genius for languages. He spoke fluently German, French and—English. So why does Capra show him talking what we would call 'p'tit nègre' and what you call, I believe, talking pidgin English?

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Autumn 1972 issue (no. 11) contains an extensive portrait of the career of **SIR ALEC GUINNESS**, based in part on a rare interview; a nostalgic survey of some **HOLLYWOOD WESTERNS** that have never received proper recognition; an interview with screenwriter **WALTER NEWMAN** who reminisces on his collaborations with Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, John Sturges, etc.; and an intriguing study of the brilliant but largely forgotten Swedish director **PER LINDBERG**. These articles include a rich selection of photographs and the usual detailed documentation. There are also reviews of new films, including *The Godfather*, *Deliverance* and *The Assassination of Trotsky*, with concise profiles of their leading artistes; an expert survey of the best cartoons available for 16mm hire; and comment on a wide selection of new film books.

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I have talked German with him when he came to Berlin after the Mexico film, and I have read letters in French by him. And I am sure that Ivor Montagu could vouch for his English.

Yours faithfully,

LOTTE H. EISNER

Neuilly sur Seine.

Sight and Sound

Increases in the cost of printing, paper and postage over the past two years have made it necessary for us, in common with most other publishers, to increase our prices. From January 1st, 1973, the subscription rates for **SIGHT AND SOUND** will be as follows: £1.70 for one year, £3.20 for two years, and £4.70 for three years (postage included). Single copies will cost 35p from bookshops and newsagents, and 43p (postage included) from The British Film Institute, Publications Department, 81 Dean Street, London, W1V 6AA. In the United States, the cost per copy will be \$1.50.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KEVIN BROWNLOW is both a filmmaker (*It Happened Here*) and a film historian (*The Parade's Gone By*)... RICHARD GILBERT works for the BBC, and has written for the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Observer*, *New Society*, and in America for the *Village Voice*... AMITA MALIK is film critic of *The Statesman* in Delhi; she also writes radio and TV criticism for *The Times of India* and is a regular broadcaster and telecaster in India and abroad. Her book on Bangladesh, *The Year of the Vulture*, is being published by Orient Longman... ERIC RHODE, a contributor to **SIGHT AND SOUND** for many years, is working on a lengthy history of the cinema... ROGER SANDALL was born in New Zealand, and studied anthropology and film-making at Columbia University. Worked in and around New York as a cameraman and editor before becoming director of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Film Unit in 1965. Several of his ethnographic documentaries have been shown at Venice.

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FILM GUIDE

**ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY, THE (MGM-EMI)

Loosey's flawed, factually inconsistent and uneven account of the Mexican ice-pick murder. The star performances are a handicap, and Nicholas Mosley's script is over-explicit, but Loosey's familiar wavering balance between the real and the unreal makes for an always interesting failure. (Richard Burton, Alain Delon, Romy Schneider.) *Reviewed.*

ASYLUM (CIC)

Feeble Gothic horror, set in a private asylum, with Robert Powell doing the rounds as an idealistic doctor trying to discover where they're hiding the star patient. (Patrick Magee, Charlotte Rampling; director, Roy Ward Baker.)

*BILLY JACK (Columbia-Warner)

Odd blend of artless message and artful melodrama, about a half breed Indian who defends a Freedom School against small-town Arizona rednecks. Confused, meandering and often risible, but directed and played by Tom Laughlin with such patent sincerity that it's hard not to like its innocence even if one rejects its pretensions. (Delores Taylor, Julie Webb.)

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (Fox)

More monkey business in a flagging but seemingly infinite series. This time the script hammers home some heavy allegories for the human races, with Roddy McDowall cast as the chimpanzee who leads a guerrilla uprising. (Don Murray, Hari Rhodes; director, J. Lee Thompson.)

**CULPEPPER CATTLE CO., THE (Fox)

Curious Western about an adolescent cowboy's initiation into the ways of the West on an action-packed trail drive. A sort of cross between *Will Penny* and *The Wild Bunch*, stylishly directed by Dick Richards with some unexpected offhand humour and bloody explosions of violence, though there's often too great a distance between intention and effect. (Gary Grimes, Billy Green; director, Luke Askew.)

**DELIVERANCE (Columbia-Warner)

John Boorman picks his way brilliantly through the reefs of James Dickey's novel—boys' own adventure, ecological alarms, man versus nature—adding a teasing twist of his own: a dark, haunting implication that concern is too late, that the American landscape is already dead. (Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds.) *Reviewed.*

*DIRTY MARY (Rank)

Nelly Kaplan's *La Fiancée du Pirate*, or *Cold Comfort Farm* in French. A black-humoured, Buñuelian excursion to a very strange rural backwater, where the village drudge (the amazing Bernadette Lafont) dresses up, seduces the menfolk and wreaks a rustic revenge for the death of her mother. Delirious, grotesque, and much sharper than it looks. (Georges Gétet, Michel Constantin.)

*ENDLESS NIGHT (British Lion)

Uncharacteristic Agatha Christie

puzzle with a largely uneventful, murderless plot and more than a flavour of *Marnie* to Sidney Gilliat's treatment. Hayley Mills as a very rich girl and Hywel Bennett as the disturbed con-man who marries her seem too young for their parts in an otherwise surprisingly good-humoured and likeably old-fashioned thriller. (George Sanders.)

**EVEL KNEIVEL (MGM-EMI)

Genial, funny and unexpected film based on the career of Robert Kneivel, the man who wants to jump the Grand Canyon on a rocket-powered bike. A stylish, straight-faced performance by George Hamilton, admirably tuned to the film's off-centre approach. (Sue Lyon; director, Marvin Chomsky.) *Reviewed.*

**FAT CITY (Columbia-Warner)

Huston's sentimental journey back to the grey, twilight world of cheap boxing-rings, smoky bars, sad whores and sweated labour. A brilliant, loving portrait of a world of illusions without hope, stunningly shot to look like a blues for the American Dream. (Stacy Keach, Jeff Bridges, Susan Tyrrell.)

*FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE, A (United Artists)

More lively antics from Sergio Leone, as Juan the peasant and Sean the IRA expatriate join forces in the Mexican revolution. Rod Steiger hams enjoyably, and dynamite, bombs and bullets find Leone's camera eye as resourceful as ever. (James Coburn, Romolo Valli.)

**FRITZ THE CAT (Black Ink)

Based on and faithful to Robert Crumb's celebrated 'underground' comic-strip, the first 'X' animation feature sets its feline anti-hero off on the definitive American odyssey, picking up girls and revolutionary clichés in an assortment of beautifully drawn locations. (Director, Ralph Bakshi.) *Reviewed.*

**GODFATHER, THE (Paramount)

Coppola's expert direction, and outstanding performances from Marlon Brando and Al Pacino, lift Mario Puzo's rather turgid novel about machinating Mafia men into the epic class, alternating violence and domestic sentiment to keep the ironies flowing. (James Caan, Robert Duvall.) *Reviewed.*

*HAMMERSMITH IS OUT (Cinerama)

Burton and Taylor in protracted parody of American ways, with half-a-dozen good gags and a curiously subdued Peter Ustinov, who also directs. Burton as the escaped Mause-like maniac has his moments.

*HARDER THEY COME, THE (Island Films)

The first Jamaican feature, a proud, confident and almost uncompromising critique of national and private corruption set against a young singer's journey from exploited innocent to embittered folk hero. Much lively detail, authentically registered, though the edge is a little blunted by a streamlined script. (Jimmy Cliff, Carl Bradshaw; director, Perry Henzell.)

**JUNIOR BONNER (Cinerama)

Peckinpah returns, pleasingly, to something like the elegiac mood of *Guns in the Afternoon*, with his 'motel cowboy' (Steve McQueen) obstinately clinging to the tattered remnants of a heroic image in a West invaded by creeping urban paralysis. (Robert Preston, Ida Lupino.) *Reviewed.*

*KEEP ON ROCKIN' (Fair Enterprises)

Nostalgic highlights from Toronto's 1969 Rock Revival, unobtrusively directed by D. A. Pennebaker and with Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Chuck Berry

bouncing out all their Fifties hits and sounding none the worse for wear.

*LALKA (Contemporary)

Bizarre Polish film, visually very striking, in which Wojciech Has applies the circumlocutory style of *The Saragossa Manuscript* to a 19th-century tale of romantic, unrequited love. The result is rather too tortuous, though the atmospheric are superb. (Mariusz Dmochowski, Beata Tyszkiewicz.)

**MINNIE AND MOSKOWITZ (Rank)

Another Cassavetes exposure of raw nerve ends in the shapeless metropolis, but with the celebrated improvisational style employed this time within a more conventional structure. As two lonely misfits struggling awkwardly to achieve a relationship, Gena Rowlands and Seymour Cassel shine over a generally excellent cast.

*MOON AND THE SLEDGEHAMMER, THE (Vaughan Films)

Fascinating documentary close-up on a family of voluntary social exiles, all doing their own thing in a wood forty miles from London. A celebration of eccentricity and individualism—warm-hearted, respectful, unselfconscious, and in no way patronising. (Director, Philip Trevelyan.)

PIED PIPER, THE (Scotia-Barber)

Colourful but largely undistinguished version of the Hamelin legend by Jacques Demy, whose style is cramped by sprawling subplots. The beginning promises a Demy fairytale; the rest is as lifeless as the rats, a very tame bunch. (Donovan, Michael Hordern, Donald Pleasence.)

POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY, THE (Scotia-Barber)

Grim and gratuitously nasty voodoo drama, with Shirley MacLaine playing a West Side divorcee who wanders the Harlem streets in silly hats to liberate her brother from alien influences. (Perry King, Michael Hordern; director, Waris Hussein.)

**PRIME CUT (Fox)

The new feature by Michael Ritchie confirms the indications in *Downhill Racer* of a talent already well formed and a style that knows what it is about. *Prime Cut*, though, is something of a puzzle—a mystery tour with no clear destination, though the journey is generally exhilarating. (Lee Marvin, Gene Hackman.) *Reviewed.*

**PULP (United Artists)

Michael Caine as a pulp writer whose plots rise up to haunt him when he's hired to ghost the memoirs of retired gangster movie star Mickey Rooney. A raffishly good-humoured and nicely scripted thriller comedy with lots of jokes, quite a few of them funny. (Lionel Stander, Elizabeth Scott; director, Mike Hodges.)

*ROMA (United Artists)

Fellini's episodic essay on the eternal city, with all the familiar preoccupations on parade, and all the gusto and egotism. Some dazzling, characteristic sequences, including the wartime music-hall, the excavation of a subterranean Roman villa, and the motorbike night ride. *Reviewed.*

*SAVAGE MESSIAH (MGM-EMI)

In his cultural globe-trotting Ken Russell turns his attention to the sculptor Henri Gaudier Brzeska. Agreeably acted, less epic in sweep and therefore more watchable than recent Russells, the film still betrays more respect for the artistic temperament than for the work of art. (Dorothy Tutin, Scott Antony, Helen Mirren.)

SHAFT'S BIG SCORE (MGM-EMI)

Second time round for Shaft, the black private eye, this time not so much Bogarting as Bonding. Jaded plot, about squabbling gangsters in Harlem, ends with a big helicopter chase; Gordon Parks directs as though he had lead in his boots. (Richard Roundtree, Moses Gunn, Joseph Mascolo.)

**SILENT RUNNING (Rank)

First feature of Douglas Trumbull, who worked on *2001* and achieves striking, though more modest, special effects in this quaint, poetic tale of a mad scientist and two pet computers who disobey orders to preserve a forest in space against the day when a defoliated Earth comes to its senses. The ecological message, unfortunately, is hammered home by crude pop songs. (Bruce Dern.)

*SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE (Rank)

Cautious, respectful adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's bizarre fantasy about the sickness of war. Lukewarm satire replaces the novel's disarming absurdity, and the space-time distortions are too smoothly assimilated by a script which misses most of the Vonnegut anarchy. (Michael Sacks, Ron Leibman, Eugene Roche; director, George Roy Hill.) *Reviewed.*

SNOOPY, COME HOME (Fox)

The further animated adventures of Snoopy, this time with the beagle caught between Charlie Brown and a previous owner to whom he takes a doggy fancy. Nothing like vintage Schulz, alas, and still peppered with tiresome songs. (Director, Bill Melendez.)

*TALES FROM THE CRYPT (Cinerama)

Another portmanteau horror entertainment from Amicus, rather disappointing after *Torture Garden* but directed by Freddie Francis with his usual flair for alarming visual effect. Peter Cushing in fine form, despite some wooden dialogue. (Ralph Richardson, Joan Collins, Ian Hendry.)

**TEN DAYS' WONDER (Hemdale)

Chabrol's teasingly brilliant adaptation of, and improvement on, the Ellery Queen mystery in which the solution hinges on the Ten Commandments. Reminiscent of *Le Scandale* in style, but more Nietzschean than Hitchcockian, as it runs the gamut from Genesis to the Apocalypse. (Orson Welles, Anthony Perkins, Michel Piccoli, Marlène Jobert.) *Reviewed.*

*WAR BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, THE (Fox)

The sex war according to James Thurber, cleverly mixing cartoons with live action and splendidly performed by Barbara Harris and Jack Lemmon. Distinctly patchy though, and too often degenerating into cute domestic comedy. (Jason Robards; director, Melville Shavelson.)

**WINTER SOLDIER (Connoisseur)

A chilling piece of cinema testimony, with Vietnam veterans in Detroit recounting the atrocities they observed and perpetrated, and attempting to analyse the society that conditioned them to do it. Not a film for flag-wavers, cinephiles or the squeamish.

*YOUNG WINSTON (Columbia-Warner)

Carl Foreman's adaptation of *My Early Life*, taking his hero through lonely childhood, Harrow, the Boer War and up to his first parliamentary triumph. Attempts to break the narrative pattern, via flashbacks and interviews with the principals, but historical upholstery wins the day. Good performance by Robert Shaw as Lord Randolph. (Simon Ward, Anne Bancroft; director, Richard Attenborough.) *Reviewed.*

the other cinema

Film Catalogue Summer, 1972

The Other Cinema
12/13 Little Newport Street
London WC2H 7JJ

Price 20p. Telephone: 01-734 8508/9



MEXICO: THE FROZEN REVOLUTION

Directed by
Raymundo Gleyzer



Fidel

USA 1960
Director: RAYMUNDO GLEYZER
Producer: JAIL LAMAR
Cinematographer: JAIL LAMAR
Distributor: JAIL LAMAR
Length: 100 mins.

Here, many of our new members of the Cuban revolution are seen in the act of being recruited by Fidel Castro. The film is a powerful and moving portrait of the young men who have joined the revolution. It is a film that is both a historical document and a work of art. The film is a powerful and moving portrait of the young men who have joined the revolution. It is a film that is both a historical document and a work of art.

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THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES

Directed by
Fernando Solanas and
Octavio Getino



British Sounds

BRITISH SOUNDS: A FILM BY JILL GARD
Director: JILL GARD
Producer: JILL GARD
Cinematographer: JILL GARD
Distributor: JILL GARD
Length: 100 mins.

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A FILM BY *** FRED HAINES



Punishment Park

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MARLENE JOBERT · MICHEL PICCOLI

in another tremendous thriller by

CLAUDE CHABROL

TEN DAYS' WONDER

COLOUR

(AA)